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“THE  
Song of Songs  
WHICH IS  
Solomon's.”



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Plain and Practical Exposition

OF THE

SONG OF SONGS, WHICH IS

SOLOMON'S.

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MINISTER OF ST. LUKE'S EPISCOPAL CHAPEL, LEAMINGTON PRIORS.

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## PREFACE.

THIS is no attempt at bookmaking, but simply an humble effort to make plain and practical a most precious portion of God's Word, which, for one cause or other, is very generally lost sight of; and so has fallen into a kind of disrepute.

During the summer of 1850, I was led to deliver some twenty or thirty lectures on some portions of the Song of Solomon. At the time, and subsequently, I was much pressed to publish them. Until the close of last year, however, I could not persuade myself that it was either my duty or wisdom to comply with the request of those whose judgment might be more favourable to the delivery of *lectures*, than the present *compressed* and (in many instances) *extended* form of exposition of the whole Song. In the midst of pressing and constant ministerial engagements, I commenced, in December, 1852, the preparation of the following pages, and have hurried them through the press as best I could. I have not sought to adorn, but hope I have been enabled to make plain some portions of Christ's Truth, and the Believer's experience of His dealings. I have expressed, in great plainness of speech, the sublime truths contained in this Song of Songs. Those who seek for truth itself, rather than its adornments and decorations, will pardon the homeliness and simplicity of language, which has been studiously aimed at.

Whatsoever of God's Truth you find herein, may you be enabled to receive in the love of it : whatever imperfections (and, I doubt not, they are manifold), may you have charity to pardon. May the Holy Ghost's inspiration sanctify the Reader and Author through the Truth ! May they both thereby enjoy an "undoubted interest in Him : a transcendent affection towards Him : an evident conformity to Him on earth : and an everlasting enjoyment of Him in Heaven"—who is the sum and substance of all Holy Scripture, and especially of this Song of Songs, JESUS CHRIST, to whom be glory for ever and ever ! *AMEN and AMEN !!*

# THE SONG OF SOLOMON.

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## CHAPTER I.

### 1. *The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's.*

These words inform us who the Author of this Book of Scripture was ; also the nature of its composition, and its supreme excellency. The Author was Solomon—inspired by the Holy Ghost. The structure of the composition is that of a Spiritual Drama, or Allegorical Poem or Poems. Its superiority, above all other poems in matter, manner, and style of composition, well entitles it to be designated the “*Song of Songs.*”

When or where Solomon composed this Book of Songs is not of great moment.

It seems most probable that in old age when, after his sad backslidings he had been drawn again to the God of his father David, being moved by the Holy Ghost, Solomon composed these Canticles, as well as the Books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.

Certain it is that he who had passed thro' such varied experience—a child of God in his youth, a

backslider in his manhood, and again a chastened, restored believer in his old age—must have been well fitted to act as the amanuensis (so to speak) of the Holy Ghost, in setting forth the mysteries of Jesus' love, and the experiences of a Believer's spiritual life.

The Divine Authority of this Book has been denied by some in past days. Unhappily, the rationalistic views which obtain so largely in our day have prevailed to such a fearful extent, that not a few make no scruple of expressing their dis-esteem of this precious portion of God's Word. And even if they do not declare their positive unbelief in its inspiration, "looking upon it as a mere marriage song," they plainly shew by the language in which they speak of it, that they hold it in much less value than other portions of Holy Writ.

A sufficient answer to all such disputes is this: (I)—That it was always received by the Ancient Jews, "*to whom the oracles of God were committed*" as an inspired portion of Holy Scripture. "All the Scriptures" says the Mishna "are Holy, but the Song of Songs is the Holy of Holies." Also their ancient Book of Zohar declares "that Solomon composed it by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit."

(II)—This Song of Songs thus recognised by

the Ancient Jews was in the Canon of Scripture when Our Lord Himself tabernacled on earth. Was He the great Prophet of His Church? and yet did He suffer this portion of Scripture to pass unnoticed without animadversion, while He denounced in unmeasured terms the traditions of Elders, who by their glosses had made void the Law of God?

Had this Song been what these Modern Teachers would fain have us believe—a “mere Song of love,” striking for its imagery, but uninstructional for “doctrine, or correction in righteousness;” can we suppose for one moment the Great Teacher Himself would have been silent? Was He so unmindful of the necessities of His Church, or of the quick-sightedness of its enemies, as to permit a book, uninspired, and yet pretending to inspiration to remain among the “oracles of God,” if it had not been in very truth the composition of a “*holy man, inspired by the Holy Ghost?*” The silence of Christ and His Apostles on the point is sufficient proof that they recognised this Book as part and parcel of the inspired Word. But the believer in Jesus, who walks by another rule than unaided reason or scholastic criticisms finds an inward testimony—a still small voice, the witness of his own spirit, to the divine inspiration and authority of this Book. He finds here his

own experience more or less described. He knows that what is true of one member of God's family is also true generally of all, and thus, when he takes up this Song of Songs he finds a description (rich in beautiful and poetic imagery, but rich too in truth and real life) of the condition, privilege, and destinies of that Church which, like a Bride "*arrayed in fine linen and white,*" shall be made ready "*for the marriage of the Lamb :*" of whom it is prophecied—" *As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so thy God rejoices over thee !*"

May not indeed this circumstance—viz., the deeply experimental nature of this Book account for the dislike of some, and the mistakes of others respecting it ?

The Spirit-taught scholar of Holy Writ is in truth "*wiser than his ancients*" in this respect. In this word he beholds, as in a glass, his own spiritual poverty and conflicts and consolations, the rich treasure of his privileges and the spring of his purest and brightest hopes. But what of all this can the mere critic, however versed in "Hebrew, Greek and Latin" know, unless the Spirit pour light into his soul, and love into his heart ?

Of all the Books of Scripture, there is scarcely any portion, if any, which furnishes a truer test

of a Believer's spiritual condition. It is full of Christ, whose excellencies and mercies, and compassionate long-suffering are set forth under the most lively figures, to encourage and sustain the weary disciple in the midst of his manifold infirmities. Certainly no spiritual reader of this portion of God's Word can rise up from his meditations upon it, without feeling that its words are sweet unto the spiritual taste—"yea, *sweeter than honey to his mouth.*" What can be more encouraging than the picture here presented to us of that Saviour, who "*loveth unto the end;*" who, notwithstanding all the infirmities and failings of His beloved ones, is yet unoffended, delighting to win back the "spoiler of his own peace" and the would-be destroyer of his own happiness, to the full enjoyment of that love which passeth understanding?

What can be more precious to the weary soul of the tempted and afflicted child of God, than to contemplate the unwearied grace and love of Jesus—"the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever?" Who, notwithstanding all his own faithlessness and inconstancy; wanderings and mistakes; luke-warmness and backslidings, finds Him always constant in His love—ever mindful of His covenant—always indulgent to weakness—ever ready to forgive the waywardness of His



Beloved, though feeble Disciples. In these days of hot controversy and religious activity, one fears the hearts of Believers have waxed cold in that kind of love for the person and presence of Jesus which drew forth the tears of Mary, when she said—“*they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him :*” or the earnest longings of the spouse, in this Song of Songs—“*I sought Him, but I could not find Him ; I culled Him, but He gave me no answer.*” But in this sweet Song, attachment to the Person of Christ—“ardent love for Him, without danger of excess or disproportion are commended and enforced.” Here the Believer is taught how to preserve his communion with Christ: how to think of the Person of Christ: how to estimate his own perfection (though conscious of many imperfections) in the perfect righteousness of another, Who was without sin, and yet endured its penalties, that His people might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

Reader, if you are a child of God by adoption and grace, I beseech this one thing of you at the very threshold of my humble endeavour, to shew that this “ Song of Songs ” sets forth the love of God in the person and work of Christ Jesus. It is this :—that you will offer up a brief prayer for yourself, and every other reader

of this volume—"that the Almighty God, with whom is the residue of the Spirit, will pour down His blessing upon the reading of this Book by whomsoever it may be perused, to the setting forth of the preciousness of Christ, and the riches of the grace of His glorious Gospel !

2. *Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth : for thy love is better than wine.*

This is the breathing of a devout soul for *nearer* and more full manifestations of Christ's love. The language is abrupt, but it is just that very style of expression which suits the heart under strong emotions of earnest and deep affection. It is the genuine, unformal expression of deep feeling—careless how it declares itself, except to make its affection intelligible and attractive to the object, whose increased tokens of love it so ardently desires. It is the language of a soul *conscious of* a certain amount of favor in the eyes of her beloved. It clearly implies and gratefully acknowledges its acceptance with Him. It is the language of one who *has* found Christ mighty to save and pardon : who *has* believed to the forgiveness of sin. They are words of one like him who could say, "*this one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, but now I*

see"<sup>1</sup>—“*I know whom I have believed.*”<sup>2</sup>

The speaker is the Church, or Bride of Christ; or, in the singular and individual character, the true Believer in Jesus. All such as can take this language into their own lips, do testify that, having found Jesus, and by God's grace been drawn to Him, and by faith have laid their sins on Him, and thus realised their forgiveness and acceptance in Him—now desire more close and blessed fellowship with Him whom they love, “*because He first loved*” them. This is carefully to be observed. Throughout this Book, it is not “*coming to Jesus*” but communion with Jesus. It is not the finding Him for the first time, but returning to Him again and again, after spiritual sloth or careless forgetfulness, or worldly compliances. It is not the cry of one whose soul is pierced through with many sorrows, and presses hard the entreaty “*God be merciful to me a sinner,*” but the repentance of one, whose language is “*My soul cleaveth unto the dust, quicken me O Lord according unto Thy Word.*”<sup>3</sup> This is the very soul and meaning of this Holy Book. The very first verse gives an insight to the remainder. “*Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth.*” Full of her own need, and full of fervent desires after Christ, the

1. Jno ix. 25.    2. I. Tim. ii. 1.    3. Psalm cxix. 25.

speaker here, like Mary Magdalene to the supposed gardener, omits to mention Him by name "*if thou have borne HIM hence*"—both meaning *Jesus*, but neither naming Him. Their hearts were inditing good thoughts of Jesus, and filled with intense, longing desire after Him; and so ready were they to think others were like them in this respect that they forget to mention even His name. They had before time "*tasted that the Lord was gracious*," and both were agreed in this:—" *Whom have I in Heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison with Thee*"<sup>1</sup>

"*Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth.*" Kisses are tokens of love among near relatives, expressing *intimate, familiar and sensible* affection. Believers are a "*people near to the Lord.*" "*Ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.*"<sup>2</sup> Kisses too are tokens of reconciliation. Esau when reconciled to Jacob "*kissed him.*" And so the Apostle tells the "*faithful in Christ Jesus*" that they by the cross are *reconciled* unto God.<sup>3</sup>

These blessed privileges belong to the children of God. They only can realise or enjoy them. But, if for a season they loose their relish of them, or through neglect and carnal security

1. Psalm lxxiii. 25.    2. Eph. ii. 13.    3. Col. i. 21.

slightly esteem them, Christ withdraws Himself, perhaps for a season. He hides His face. He withholds His tokens of love, and then the cry is made, perhaps impatiently, "*Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth.*"

Yet it is beautiful to see, that though unconscious for the moment of the immediate presence of Christ, the soul of the Believer loses not the consciousness of its true relationship to Jesus. It does not doubt *His* love, or belie His word; He "*loveth His own unto the end.*" "*Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.*"

Reader, has your heart ever been so full of Christ's love that, without hypocrisy, and from the depth of your very soul you have prayed this prayer? Has thine heart ever felt its own emptiness and vileness? Has it not turned away oftentimes with sickening disgust from the hollowness and heartlessness of the world's children, whose love was but like the "morning cloud and early dew?" Or, has it happened that after a season of worldliness and lukewarmness, secret forgetfulness of Christ and heart-backslidings from Him, after being filled with all the lying vanities of the world, the flesh and the Devil: thy soul tired out with the idols of its own formation, unsatisfied with the chaff and husks it

has been filled with, even to loathing—has at length returned to seek Him whom it had for a season forsaken? If so, then you can understand the earnest prayer of that soul which, conscious of its distance from Christ and its long lost enjoyment of His love, exclaims (earnestly remembering former blessings) “*Let Him kiss me*”; or “*O that He would kiss me with the kisses of His mouth!*”

Reader, if thy soul knows not the love of Christ, it will turn with loathing and ridicule from words like these!

But this only proves the truth of Scripture, that “*the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit, neither knoweth them, because they are spiritually discerned.*”<sup>1</sup> May God’s Holy Spirit enlighten thy soul, and shed abroad therein the “love of Jesus Christ!” Remember how it is written “*If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha.*”<sup>2</sup>

“*Thy love is better than wine.*” This is the reason assigned *why* the soul so earnestly desired Christ’s presence—“*for Thy love is better than wine.*” “Wine” is continually employed in Holy Scripture to symbolise the choicest of *earthly* productions. So here doubtless the meaning is, that the renewed soul esteems

1. I. Cor. ii., 14

2. I. Cor. xvi. 22.

Christ's love as preferable to the best natural joy which can possibly gladden man's heart. However good and choice be the gifts and blessings of earth, and which the children of the world enjoy, they are not to be compared with the enjoyment of the Believer, which flows from the love of Christ. "*O how excellent is Thy loving kindness, it is better than life itself!*"<sup>1</sup> But to be more particular—for it is both interesting and profitable to draw out the parallel and see in how many respects "the love of Christ" is "*better than wine.*"

"No man" says the Lord, "having drunk old wine, straightway desireth *new*; for he saith the *old* is better."<sup>2</sup> It was a proverb in Israel *then* as it is with us—that "age makes wine better." But what is there to be compared for antiquity with the love of Christ, which existed before ever the earth or the worlds were made? This is the testimony of the Holy Ghost to the eternal love of Christ: "*the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*"<sup>3</sup> And again: "*I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was.*"<sup>4</sup> In the original, "*set up*" signifies "*anointed*;" i.e. "*I*," viz. "*Wisdom*"—the second person in the Trinity was

1. Psalm xxxvi. 7.—Psalm lxiii. 3.      2. Luke, v. 39.

3. Rev. xiii. 8.

4. Prov. viii. 23.

ordained of the Father, first to create, and preserve, afterward to redeem, and finally to restore *all* things:—and “*that from the beginning,*” before which there was nothing except one vast abyss of eternity—yea, “*before ever the earth was.*” And going forward to the thirty-first verse, we find revealed the eternal love of Christ—“*Then*” (at the creation of the world) “*I was by Him*”—i.e. in the bosom of His Father, “*and my delights*”—the affections of my soul and bowels of mercies, “*were with the sons of men;*” viz., while waiting the appointed season before revealing myself to them as Emmanuel—God manifest in the flesh. Surely then, as to antiquity, nothing can compare with the love of Jesus.

Again, Christ’s “*love is better than wine*”—because it is both cheaper and more plentiful. Wine is a luxury that can be purchased only by the rich. The love of Christ is “*without money and without price.*”<sup>1</sup> It is “*freely shed abroad*”<sup>2</sup> in the hearts of His people by the Holy Ghost. “*Whoever will*” is bid “*come and take the water of life freely.*”<sup>3</sup> And as it is both cheaper and freer than wine, so it is more plentiful.

In some places wine is scarce, and not to

1. Isaih lv., 1.    2. Rom. v. 5.    3. Rev. xiv. 17.



be had even at a very great price. Even at the marriage feast of Cana in Galilee they wanted wine. But of the *love* of Christ there is and never can be any lack—It is an exhaustless fountain, flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb. It is that river, whose streams “make glad the city of God.”<sup>1</sup> Thousands and tens of thousands have drank of its waters and lived; but it flows as freely and plentifully *now* as when it was first opened for sinners. Jesus testifies now to each who reads or hears his words, of the fulness and plenteous streams of His love, “*If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.*”<sup>2</sup>

Christ’s “*love is better than wine*” too if compared to the *effects* produced by both on the souls and bodies of such as are partakers thereof. Wine “makes glad the heart of man,” but only for a moment under false excitement, which leaves him afterward in a more depressed condition. Christ’s love gives the sinner’s heart *life, joy, and peace* in the Holy Ghost—“a joy unspeakable and full of glory!” Wine if drank to excess destroys man’s health, debilitates his mind, consumes his body, and wastes his estate; but let a man drink ever so freely of the love of Christ—his

I. Psalm xlv. 4.      2. Jno. vii, 37.

soul is benefitted thereby. Therefore we read the exhortation—“*drink abundantly my Beloved.*”<sup>1</sup>

Reader, does thy soul respond to this preference of the Church for Christ? Turn not away from this subject till thou hast faithfully brought thy conscience to the test of this Scripture—Do I esteem the love of Christ above every other? yea, the most choice and darling idols of the world’s treasures and good things? Is thine heart as David’s, when he exclaimed “*Whom have I in Heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth I desire in comparison with Thee?*”<sup>2</sup> Reader, hast thou thus been taught in the school of Christ?

Canst thou indeed set to thy seal that this is true concerning the excellencies of Jesus and his love, that they far exceed in thy esteem the choicest gifts and delicacies of earth—“the wealth of Ormus and of Ind,” yea “barbaric pearl and gold,” wherewith “the gorgeous East with richest hand” adorns her children and captivates their hearts?

Happy, blessed soul, which thus hath been enamoured of the love of Christ: which sees in Him a beauty and an excellence and a satisfying portion—a divine compassion and unfathomable grace—such as cannot be compared to anything in Earth or Heaven! Oh! see to it Believer—that you lose not one single opportunity of exhibiting before the

1. v. 1.

2. Psalm lxxiii. 25.

church and the world that the *love of Christ* fills your soul—constrains your life—purifies your conscience—guides your conduct !

Let it be seen whose you are and whom you love.

Be not ashamed of the reproach of your Beloved Master.

The world will hate you and mock your ways. The very professing Church will be in the forefront to ridicule—to express doubt—and offer prudent suggestions lest your decided tone and manner of life and love for Christ should injure the cause or disgust an unbelieving world. Heed them not. Live separate from the pleasure-loving—Christ-slaying multitude. .

Touch not—taste not—handle not their choice—but perishing delicacies. You love Christ. Let that love fill thy heart so that all ways and manners and pleasures of the world—will become distasteful. —Your soul will have no pleasure in them. The worlds' gaieties—amusements and even lawful recreations and enjoyments are really nothing to the soul thus filled with the love of Jesus. It offers nothing that can satisfy the desires or soothe the longings of an immortal soul.

Ah ! this is true religion—when Christ occupies the same place in a man's heart, that He does in Creation. *There* He is “all in all.” And so is He

in the ransomed soul of the Believer. "*Thou O God art the thing that I long for*"—"My flesh and my heart faileth me:"—my health and my friends fail me—my property and earthly hopes fail me: my own heart and conscience fail me and condemn me—"but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for evermore."<sup>1</sup>—"Thy love is better than wine."

3. *Because of the savour of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee.*

The Church (which is the Lamb's Bride) continues in these words her commendation of Him, whose tokens of love she had so passionately called for in the previous verse. There she praised His love and celebrated its excellencies above every other earthly gift or blessing.

Here she commends His name—"which is above every name of things in Heaven or things on earth."—She had known "the power of Jesus' name"—as that name which alone brought salvation and peace to her sin-burdened soul. And the Church here speaks of the fragrance of Christ's name (comparing it to ointments poured forth) not only from her own

1. Psalm lxxiii. 26.

(speaking in her individual character) experience but also from the effects she had seen made upon the hearts of others—" *Because of the savour of thy good ointments,*" ("for it pleased the Father that in Jesus all fulness should dwell,") "*therefore do the Virgins love thee.*"

Let us notice (1) the figures here employed, "*the savour of thy good ointments,*" "*ointment poured out,*" and shew (2) in what sense "the name of Christ may be said to be "like ointment poured forth."

1. In Holy writ, ointment is the *type* or *emblem* of the Holy Ghost. It represents *the graces* of the Spirit. Under the Levitical Priesthood, the *holy anointing* oil was made by *God's direction*: and with it *Kings, Priests, and Prophets* were anointed to their several offices. Thus *Saul, David, and Solomon* were anointed to be *KINGS*:—Aaron and his sons to be *PRIESTS*: Elisha, in the room of Elijah, to be a *PROPHET*.—Just so was Christ Jesus anointed with the Spirit of God as *KING*, to sit on His Throne and rule in the hearts of his chosen people: as *PRIEST* to offer sacrifice and make atonement for the *Transgressor*:<sup>1</sup> as *PROPHET* to bind up the broken-hearted and preach glad tidings to the meek.<sup>2</sup>—Yes, Jesus *himself* was "*anointed with this oil of gladness above his fellows*"<sup>3</sup> as *Mediator*!

1. Isaiah liii.

2. Isaiah

Just as the precious ointment which was poured out upon Aaron and "*ran down upon his beard, yea went down to the skirts of his clothing*"—so the Holy Ghost descends from the head, *even from Jesus the High Priest of the Church*, upon all his members. From Him they receive "*an anointing which teacheth all things.*"<sup>1</sup>

Mark those words of St. John. He tells us where the *true doctrine* of the development of Christian truth is to be found. Not in the wisdom of man's teaching—BUT BY THE ANOINTING of the *Holy Ghost!* "*Cease ye then from man whose breath is in his nostril!*"<sup>2</sup> "*To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to that, it is because there is no truth in them.*"<sup>3</sup> Seek, seek for the anointing of the Holy Ghost, who is your only infallible teacher!

This "*ointment poured out,*" reminds us of another use, which, under the *Levitical law*, was typical or emblematical. (30 *Exodus*, 25, 26, 27, 29.) Let him that readeth understand. Those vessels of the tabernacle, thus *sanctified* and *separated*, do most beautifully represent the Lord's chosen people. Vessels of mercy which he had afore prepared unto glory. In their natural state they are useless vessels—vessels of wrath fitted for destruction.—But

1. Psalm xlv. 7.

2. I. Jno. ii. 27.

3. Isaiah ii. 22.

4. Isaiah viii. 16.

when anointed with this holy oil, they are not only made fit for their Saviour's use *here*, but prepared also for the *glory* which shall be revealed hereafter. They have the *oil in their vessels* as well as the *lamp of profession* in their *hands*—Like the wise Virgins in the Gospel, they are prepared for the midnight cry “*Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet Him,*”<sup>1</sup> and they shall enter in and be partakers of the Bridegroom's rejoicings!

Reader, is it thus with Thee? Hast thou the oil of the Spirit in thy soul, as well as the *profession* of Christ Jesus on thy lip? Hast thou received the Holy Ghost? Blessed and gracious souls are those who have been anointed with “this oil of gladness!” The Lord pour it out more abundantly! May you be filled with all *joy* and *peace* in believing and abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost!

*Possibly* some who read these pages, have souls into which this *holy oil hath never been poured*.

Is it so? Look into your hearts this very moment! For if you have not the Spirit of Christ dwelling in you, you *are none of His*! If you have not been *anointed* with this ointment of the *grace of God's Spirit*, your *case* is the most wretched that can be imagined! You are yet a *vessel of wrath*! You are only fitting for *destruction*!

1. Matthew xxv. 1—11.

You say "these words cannot possibly be applicable to me." You are diligent in every good thing: always in your place in the sanctuary, ready to give and glad to distribute. You are upright in all your dealings, and as compared with your neighbours round you—you are as good as most of them, and better than many! This may be so. But the word of God says, that "*to compare yourselves among yourselves is not wise.*"<sup>1</sup>—It says *too, positively and unequivocally*—"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature."<sup>2</sup>

Be assured of this. You must have the Spirit of God to renew you. You must have His anointing to abide with you, to sanctify you day by day—You must have the title of meetness by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, as well as the title of *right*, by the blood of Jesus, e're you enter upon the inheritance of the Saints in light!

"*THY name is like ointment poured out.*"—The Church, in these words, declares the *fragrancy* and *preciousness* of Christ's name.

In a like spirit, a sweet singer in Israel has expressed this same idea in other words—

I love the name of Jesus,  
Immanuel, Christ the Lord  
Like fragrance on the breezes,  
His name abroad is poured.

1. I Cor. x. 12.

2. 11 Cor. v. 17.





*Thy name is like ointment poured out.* What is intended by the name of Christ? He has many names in Holy Writ. But some one in particular, connected with the figure, and to which it is compared, is here intended. The name CHRIST will at once occur to your minds. This word harmonises beautifully with the figure—for Christ signifies “anointed.” And this name Christ, answers to the name of *Messiah*, in the Old Testament Scriptures.

The saints of God, in olden time, expected the Redeemer to come to Zion with this name, and when Christ, did come, *they* said one to the other—“We have found the *Messiah*, *which being interpreted*, is the Christ.”<sup>1</sup>

How grateful was the name of Christ to old Simeon in the Temple, and Anna the Prophetess, and others who *looked* for the consolation of Israel! They could—and *in spirit—did say* “Thy name is like *ointment* poured forth.”

There is another name by which Christ is called, and which is like ointment poured forth. When the angel of the Lord announced to Joseph the birth of the Redeemer in the flesh, he said—“*thou shalt call his name JESUS*”—(and why?) *because he shall save his people from their sins.*”<sup>2</sup>

Oh! surely—if there be any thing in a name—this name is above every name! To a sin-convinced,

1. Jno. i. 41.

2. Matt. i. 21.

soul-stricken sinner how *fragrant* the name of Jesus! How *precious* the word of salvation!—How glad the tidings of great joy which the name of Jesus brings!

Cannot you imagine the grateful joy with which the *liberated* slave or the condemned criminal hails the name of the friend who procures his release from *cruel* bondage or shameful death? And oh! when you remember the *infinitely* greater *mercy* which the ransomed people of God are partakers of through Jesus, can any *language* be too strong in which to express the love of those who owe their present life with all its mercies—their future hopes with all their glory to Him whose *name* was called Jesus because He saved His people from their sins?

But there is yet *another* name—precious to them that believe.<sup>1</sup>—Immanuel—"GOD *with* us."—This name is like ointment poured out. (i) Because *it declares Jesus to be* GOD: and (ii) that He as God was *with* us.—(i) As God, he accomplished the work he undertook. And therefore this *name* is a "name above every name," dear to the believer's soul! It assures him the sacrifice which Jesus accomplished on Calvary—the blood which He shed—the righteousness which He wrought out—is *complete* and *perfect*. For it was God in man who *was* pierced on the cross, and who shed His blood

1. Isaiah xiv.

2. Matt. i. 23.

They learn too from this name, that because He is God—therefore He “*is able to keep them from falling and none can pluck them out of His hand.*”

But this name is grateful to the Believer’s soul, because Jesus is God *with us*—God in our nature—God manifest in our flesh—flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone.

Oh! how great is the mystery of godliness. God manifest in the flesh! And this God—our God! our Saviour!!—*the mighty God—the everlasting Father—the Prince of Peace!!*

Thy name Emmanuel is like ointment poured out—grateful, most pleasant to the believer’s soul! It tells him that God—*God with us—God in our nature*—can be touched with our infirmities! <sup>1</sup>

But once more, there is *another name* by which Jesus is called and which may well be compared to ointment poured out.<sup>2</sup> “*The Lord our righteousness.*” This is the *one thing needful*, that every soul wants—a righteousness to stand in before God. How shall man be *just* before God asked Job 6000 years ago? How shall a sinner be treated by a Holy God as if he were righteous? This, this is *the* question which we must satisfactorily have an answer to, before we can die in peace. All the sacrifices and cruelties of heathen systems of religion have sprung from the vain attempt to give an answer to the

1. Heb. iv. 15.

2. Jeremiah xxiii. 6.

question and thereby give peace to the soul. But "*the world by wisdom knew not God.*"<sup>1</sup>—It never could tell *fallen, wretched* man, how "*God could be just and yet the justifier of Him that believeth in Jesus.*"<sup>2</sup>—But God revealed it in Moses and the Prophets, by type and prophecy! God declared it when Jesus walked among men, and wept, and bled. *He is the Lord our righteousness.* "*He was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God.*"<sup>3</sup>—Oh! is not *this* name—the *Lord our righteousness*, well compared to "*ointment poured forth?*"

Reader, if thou hast ever felt the burden of thine own sins, "*whose wages are death*"<sup>4</sup>—IF THOU HAST seen that thine own righteousness is as filthy rags—IF THOU HAST QUIT ALL—and counted them but loss and hindrance to your soul's salvation—IF THOU HAST COME to Jesus *blind* and *naked*—*poor* and *trembling*—and hast found Him to be all that thou needest for thy soul:—*sight*, and *clothing*, and *riches* and salvation—oh! then need I ask you—is He not *precious*? Is not His name—"the *Lord our righteousness*"—"like ointment poured forth?"

If so, it will exert the same influence over your soul as is expressed here: "thy name is like of

1. I. Cor. i. 21.

2. Rom. iii. 26.

3. II. Cor. v. 21.

4. Rom. vi. 23.

ment poured forth, *Therefore do the Virgins love thee.*"

By the *Virgins*, we understand all true Believers. —Ask then your own conscience, reader, "do I really love Jesus?" Perhaps, like *Peter* you are *grieved* that I ask you—"do you love Jesus?"

But, suffer me to ask yet further—what is the *kind* and *degree* of your *love*? Could Jesus say of you, as He did of the woman of Bethany, "*she loveth much*?"<sup>1</sup>

What costly proof of your love are you shewing in your life and conversation? We *ought* to love HIM who hath so loved us.

*We ought to love Him exceedingly above all others.* He has loved us more than angels. They sinned and were *cast out*, and are now reserved in chains and darkness until the day of judgment.

But Jesus so loved US that "*he made himself of no reputation and became obedient unto death, even the death upon the Cross.*"<sup>2</sup>

*We ought to love Him with an universal love.* If we love Jesus we shall also love them that are His. If we love Him, we shall love them that bear His image, however faintly it may be portrayed. Let them be *high* or *low*: *wise* or *foolish*: if they bear His *image* and *super-scription* we love them, because they are one in

1. Luke vii. 47.

2. Phil. ii. 7.

Christ. "*By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye have love one to another.*"<sup>1</sup>

*We ought to love Him also fervently.*

The Church of Ephesus was blamed for this—  
*"I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love."*<sup>2</sup>—Its love was no longer fervent. It had waxed cold and lukewarm. Is this a true picture of any amongst ourselves? Is that word of our Master fulfilled in us—"Because *iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold?*"<sup>3</sup>

"Do not I love Thee? O my Lord,  
 Behold my heart and see!  
 And cast each hated idol down,  
 That dares to rival Thee.

Do not I love Thee from my soul?  
 Then let me nothing love:  
 Dead be my heart to every joy,  
 When Jesus cannot move.

Is not Thy name melodious still,  
 To mine attentive ear?  
 Doth not each pulse with pleasure bound  
 My Saviour's voice to hear?

Thou know'st I love Thee, gracious Lord  
 But, O! I long to soar  
 Far from the sphere of earthly joys,  
 And learn to love Thee more."

1. Jno. xiii. 35.

2. Rev. 2.

3. Matt. xxiv. 12.

4. *Draw me, we will run after thee: the king hath brought me into his chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine: the upright love thee.*

The *believer* in these words entreats Christ to draw the desires and affections of his soul to himself, and makes a *holy* resolution, that if He will do so—then with joy he will run after Him in the ways of his commandments.

In the *second verse* the spouse speaks of the *excellency* of His love, and expresses *earnest and longing desires* for communion with Him. In the *third verse*, she speaks of the fragrancy and preciousness of Christ's name "which is *like ointment poured forth*"—and declares that the effect of this was that the Virgins, her companions, loved Him. Here she confesses the *weakness* of the believer to *love* or *follow* Christ, unless Christ would *draw* the soul after Him—"Draw me (blessed Jesus) with the cords of Thy love—from the vanity of the world—the love of self—the snare of sin." Draw me, for I have no strength to deliver my own soul: which thing if thou wilt do—then when thou hast set my feet at liberty—THEN "WE will run after Thee." **W**, i.e. every *desire* of the heart: "every

thought of the *soul*: every member of the *body* will run after Thee in the way of Thy commandments—brought into subjection to Thy law of love.”

Here (i) are words of *earnest entreaty*—“Draw me.” And (ii) words of *holy resolution*, “we will run after thee.”

(i) “It is written in *the Prophets*—And they shall all be taught of God.”<sup>1</sup>—Every man, therefore, that *hath heard*, and hath learned of God cometh to Christ Jesus.” The language here belongs clearly to those who had already come to Christ and been made *willing* in the day of His power to believe in Him for *life* and *salvation*. *It is the truth of Scripture*, and a truth which we must *each* hold and *experience* in our own souls if we would be saved—that “the condition of man after the fall of Adam, is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength and good works to faith and calling upon God—so that we have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God—without the grace of God by Christ PREVENTING US:—(10 *Article*.)

But this act of “pre-venient grace,” by which the blessed Spirit draws the sinner to Christ—by which that Spirit convinces him first of *sin* and then of *righteousness*—drawing his soul with the “cords of a man and with bands of love”—is not I

1. Jno. vi, 45.



apprehend the *drawing*—which the spouse of Christ here prays for. This had already taken place. The language employed here is evidently the language of one who had experienced that *change* by which old things were passed away and all was new. The new creation of the soul in Christ Jesus—the second birth—*had already taken place*. Else *how* should the believer desire MORE intimate communion with Christ?—and more entire subjection of his will to Christ's? if he had not already been drawn by the Spirit to Jesus and tasted something of the sweetness of Jesus' love?

Thus you see, that before you can enter into the spirit of this entreaty, "draw me," you must experience in your soul that change, without which you cannot DESIRE (still less enjoy) the presence and company of Jesus.

Dear Reader—let me put it to you—*with a solemnity* of feeling with which such a question should both be *asked* and *answered*—Has your soul ever been so convinced of sin by the Holy Ghost as to move you with fear to seek mercy from God through the blood of Jesus Christ?

Has God taken away thy stony heart and given you a heart of flesh?

Has God the Holy Ghost convinced you of your need of Jesus and enabled you to feel a *personal* interest in the Saviour?

Have you been drawn to Jesus ?

Has the Spirit of God quickened your *dead* soul to spiritual life ? Are you *dead* or *a'live* ?

Beloved, weigh these questions seriously ! Oh ! think, think before thy day of grace and mercy be clean gone for evermore—think of these things.

Sin cannot draw you to Christ—but it will surely drag your soul to hell ! If, at this moment, your soul be unconscious of any work of grace : if you art still in your *natural* state—oh ! what language can describe your *hapless* condition ! May the Spirit of Him which raised up the Lord Jesus from death—quicken thy dead soul ! Oh ! sinner as thine eye rests on these pages, consider that so long as thou art ignorant of Jesus and a stranger to His grace, thou art also an “*enemy to God by wicked works.*”<sup>1</sup>—Wilt thou not be afraid of God, who hath power to “*kill both body and soul in hell ?*”<sup>2</sup> His mercy thou art now despising !—His salvation thou art now neglecting ! Oh ! may *God himself* alarm thy soul my Brother ! May the Spirit of God move thee this moment to cry out, “*What shall I do to be saved ?*” The mighty God convince thee of sin and of righteousness ! and make thee feel thy wretched and pitiful state, while separated from *Him* who is the *fountain of life*.—Oh ! may angels rejoice over thy soul this very day. May Jesus see

1. Col. i. 21.

2. Matt. x. 28.

of the travail of His soul and be satisfied, when he hears this prayer break forth from thy lips—" *Draw me, blessed Saviour, and I will run after Thee !*"

Let us look more particularly into the words of the entreaty, "*Draw me!*"—regarding them as the petition of a *believer's soul* for *closer* communion with Jesus.

"*Draw me,*"—This is the *language* of earnest awakening to *faith* and *life*. St. Peter writing to the Romans, exhorts them saying "*it is high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our Salvation nearer than when we believed.*"<sup>1</sup> But how comes it to pass, that Christians should be called upon to awake out of sleep? Are they not *already* awakened? Have they not, long since, been aroused by the Holy Spirit from the sleep of death! Yes, undoubtedly—ye that have put on Christ. He who *aroused* you will keep you *awake* until Jesus come.—Ye shall sleep *no more* the sleep of death. But sometimes believers grow lukewarm. Drowsiness overtakes them. Sleep falls upon them even when on the watch-tower.—They forget that the night is far spent and the day is at hand.—While thus *slumbering* : thus *lukewarm* : thus *halting* in the race—the *Spirit of the Lord* draws near and arouses them, as the angel did ELIJAH under the *Juniper tree*. And then the heart crieth out

1. Rom. xiii. 2.

for God—for the *living God*. Then is prayer quickened. Then like *Jonah* in the depths of the sea—like *Manasseh* among the *thorns of the wilderness* and the *fetters of Babylon*, the voice of faith is lifted up with earnest life and meaning—  
*“Draw me and I will run after thee.”*

But it is also the language of one conscious of being at a *distance* from Jesus. Not, you will understand a distance as regards UNION—or *affection* on the part of Christ, (for a believing soul being *once* united to Jesus—cannot be distanced from him in the sense of *separation*.) For, says the Apostle,  
*“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?”*<sup>1</sup>

As regards *union* with the Lord, they are always *“a people near unto the Lord.”*—As for the love wherewith Jesus loves His Saints, having loved His *own*, which were in the world, He loveth them unto the end.

A mother *may forget* the child she gave birth to and nourished with her own life—(she may have no *compassion* on the son of her womb.) *This is possible*, strange and unnatural, as it may seem.—*“They may forget”*—says the Holy Ghost, *“yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.”*<sup>2</sup> So that when

1. Romans, viii. 35.

1. Isaiah xv. 16.

it is said the language, "*Draw me, &c.*" implies a consciousness of distance from Jesus and a desire to be drawn nearer to him—I do not speak of distance in the sense of *separation from Christ*,—neither of distance on *the part of Christ towards the Believer's soul*, as if he had ceased to love the souls of *His people*—but that distance in the believer's own soul, which every child of God oftentimes has to deplore and against which we need pray without ceasing. Yes, Beloved, some who read these words, can enter into the meaning of the words "*Draw me!*"—conscious as you oftentimes must be of the distance between your soul and Christ.—Distance which your daily cares and sorrows: your joys and troubles and contact with the world, your employments and your various callings—necessarily bring with them. And this is your struggle—to be in the world and yet *not far from Jesus*.

This is your life—to be diligent in your appointed callings, fulfilling every *social* and *relative* duty, and yet *living close to Jesus*.

This is your glory—to pass the time of your sojourning here in fear and yet to live for *Jesus*, not for self: to please *Jesus* and not the world!

And oh! Beloved, ye that know the power of the Cross of Jesus Christ—*ye that are striving to live like the chosen heritage of God*: ye that know and lament the *evil* of your own hearts, its doubts

and unbelief:—ye know, and need not that I should remind you, that in Christ Jesus *alone* ye have the gift of the Spirit. Ask therefore and ye shall receive. Pray for it and ye shall be filled. Lift up your voice and let your cry enter into His ears—  
“*Draw me and we will run after Thee.*”

This request further implies fear on the part of the believer—lest, like Demas, he should be drawn away from Christ into the world.—“*Draw me,*” or else “*I shall be drawn away.*”

The fear of this temptation, brings many of God’s people into bondage. Happy are they if this fear move them to flee from temptation and make a covenant with their *eyes* and *hearts* and *ears* against every thing of the kind.<sup>1</sup> In this sense “*blessed is the soul that feareth always.*” But godly fear of this *sort*, must not be confounded with that kind of fear which fills the soul with doubts, and destroys that *full persuasion* and holy *confidence* which honors the Lord’s promise—and which takes God at his *word*. “Prudent fear is wisdom, we then take counsel of God: but much fear is *unbelief*, we then take counsel of the Devil.”—A believer cannot trust too little to *himself*. But (blessed be God) he cannot trust too much in the *all-sufficiency* of Jesus. Does not your own *experience* confirm what the history of God’s people in Scripture also teaches us

1. Job xxxi. 1.

—that we should indeed be sorry keepers of our souls if left to ourselves? The fallen angels were their own keepers and they lost heaven.—Adam was his own keeper and he lost Paradise.<sup>1</sup>—Noah was his own keeper when he took of the juice of the grape and was *drunken*.<sup>2</sup>—Abraham was his own keeper when he journeyed down to Gerar and through fear of man spake *falsely* concerning his wife.<sup>3</sup>—David was his own keeper when he said in his prosperity, “*I shall never be moved*,” and afterwards sinned so against God and man.<sup>4</sup>—*Peter* was his own keeper when he stood by the fire in the judgment hall of Pilate warming himself with the servants of the High Priest and there denied the Lord, and with oaths and curses said “*I know not the man*.”<sup>5</sup>

You see then what sorry keepers of ourselves we should be if left to ourselves. But blessed be God we are not alone. We have such a High Priest as can be touched with our *infirmities*. To Him, therefore, Christian Brethren, let us go. To Him let us take our *temptations* and *fears*, and beseech Him to get himself the victory for us. With the Church in my text, let us say “*Draw me*,”—draw me from *myself*—draw me from the world—its *lying* vanities and *ungodly* maxims: draw me

1. Gen. iii. 20.      2. Gen. ix. 21.      3. Gen. xii. 12—13.

4. II. Samuel xi.

5. Luke xxii. 57.

from the snare of the great fowler—draw me blessed Saviour and then I “will run after thee.”

Notice too, the *holy resolve* of the petitioner—  
“*We will run after thee.*”

“Draw me,” (that we may run after thee.) We cannot do so, unless thou wilt draw us, but if thou wilt, then “we will run after thee.” You observe a change of persons, first, “Draw *ME*,” and then, “*WE* will run after thee.”—By which some think that (the “*ME*”) is the language of the Church of Christ as *one body*—and (the “*WE*”)—the particular members in the same.

Observe the language “we will run *after* thee.”—It is a following *AFTER* Christ—not a *going* TO Him. They had already *come to Him*. They desire now to follow after Him. And not only to *follow* but to *run*. Peter *followed* Christ into the High Priest’s house and tarried by the fire—But there he stumbled and fell. A soul in *good earnest runs*. Believers, does not this holy resolve, go a step beyond even the most earnest of us? How many are well contented if they can quietly follow Christ afar off and just creep into Heaven! They run eagerly to Christ when danger presents itself. Like the sailors in 107th Psalm, “*When the storms have brought them to their wit’s end then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble!*”—But oh! how few follow the Lamb now whithersoever he leadeth



them! Christ Jesus is the *fore-runner*. He has gone before us. He has left us an example both in doing and suffering, as the fulfiller of Righteousness and the Captain of Salvation. If you are only following the multitude—if you only desire just as much *religion* as will let you pass on with the world without reproach—just that amount of profession as will give ease to your conscience—verily, I tell you, you are denying Christ, when you should confess him. And oh! remember—if ye deny Him before MEN, He will deny *you* before his HOLY ANGELS!—Remember Brethren, that Holy Scripture represents the Christian as running a race—Christ as the mark, after which we press forward—Heaven the glorious prize for which we run! “*So run that ye may obtain*,”—i.e. use such *diligence, care, and constancy* in your Christian course that ye may obtain *the Crown of Glory*. Not that running in the ways of His commandments is the cause of your obtaining the prize, as it written “*It is not of Him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy*.”<sup>1</sup> But it is your privilege, and your wisdom, and your joy, to be found alway *running in the way of life*.

Believers in Jesus, this holy resolve, is *one* which becomes you to make—“*Draw me and we will run after Thee*.” Do not loiter by the way. Think

1 Rom. ix. 19.

not, as though you had already obtained or were already perfect. Count not yourself to have apprehended, but *forgetting* the things behind, reach forth unto *those* which are before, and *press* towards the *mark* for the prize of our calling in Christ Jesus.

Let this be your constant petition, coupled with its holy resolve—" *Draw me and we will run after Thee.*"—*Run cheerfully and rapidly and willingly after Jesus.* Let David's resolve be ours<sup>1</sup>—" *I will run in the way of thy commandments when thou shalt enlarge my heart.*" Remove the backwardness that is in me from duty and I shall observe to do all thy counsels cheerfully and joyfully.

*Run swiftly also.* " *I made haste and delayed not to keep thy commandments.*"<sup>2</sup> " *Immediately,*" says St. Paul, " *I conferred not with flesh and blood,*"<sup>3</sup> when God called me by His Son Jesus Christ, and sent me to preach the Gospel. The Apostle took not counsel of man. He acted decisively and swiftly.

*So run too that you may obtain.*

" *Let your running be like the running of one that hath strength.*"—To run a little way and then stop by the way side for recovery of strength and breath is *sorry* work for an earnest racer. Therefore run *perseveringly* like one that hath *strength*. This you have not in yourself. But there is ful-

1. Psalm cxix. 32.    2. Psalm cxix. 60.    3. Gal. i. 16.

ness of strength in Christ. *Wait* therefore upon the Lord in prayer, and “you shall *then* renew your strength, shall *run* and not be *weary*, and walk and not faint.”<sup>1</sup> The time is short—the stream of life runs fast—each moment brings you nearer to Christ’s presence and eternity. Oh! that you may be led to consider *solemnly* “*after what am I running.*” *Is it after things on earth? or things that belong unto Salvation?* Take heed that ye be running in the right way—the strait and narrow path. Be as those ready to go forth to meet their returning Lord. Signs and warnings fall *thickly* round us. The Lord is dealing with his own people as he dealt with *Lot* in Sodom.—Judgment is beginning at the house of the Lord and what think ye shall be the end of those that know not the Lord?<sup>2</sup> Let God’s people be *warned! aroused! encouraged!* Let them be zealous and do their first works!—Let them *come out* more decidedly than ever for the Lord and be separate from the world, and touch not the unclean things thereof! The master calls you Beloved People of God, to rise up higher in the scale of spiritual life. *Halt* no longer between Christ and Mammon. He calls you to live more earnestly for Him. Please not yourselves even as He pleased not Himself. Look off the world to Jesus. Gaze upon the face of your

1. Isaiah xl. 31.

2. Pet. iv. 17.

King in his glory until beholding as in a *glass* the glory of the Lord—you become changed into the same image, from *glory* to *glory* as by the Spirit of the Lord!

“*The King hath brought me into His chambers.*” —Who is the King and what are these “chambers” into which the believer (in answer to prayer in the first clause of the verse,) was now brought? A greater King than Solomon is here. He it is *who as God, is King of the Earth and Heaven and Hell*—and as *Mediator* has a kingdom which He purchased with his own blood—a spiritual kingdom of redeemed souls—a kingdom which shall endure—which, as the Wonderful Counsellor, He will rule<sup>1</sup> in righteousness when all earthly dominions and principalities have been swept away by the besom of destruction!

It is Jesus, the “Head over all things to His Church”—*the Lord, the King of His Church and Saints*, who is here spoken of “*Hath brought me into His Chambers,*”—literally, “*hath caused me to come,* (in answer to my prayer) *by drawing me.*” —I called unto Him, “*Quicken me O Lord in Thy ways*”—“*Draw me and I will run after thee*”—And lo! my King and my Lord brought me into closer and more intimate communion with Himself

1. Daniel vii. 25, 27.

—“*He hath brought me into his chambers.*”—In the mount of prayer is Christ’s church set. There is His presence felt and there His favours enjoyed by His faithful praying children.—There He shews himself. There He displays His Grace. There He draws nigh to the believer’s soul and displays to Him the gifts of His grace and the treasures of His unsearchable riches !

*Prayer* is the presence-chamber of our God. In it we draw near to God and come before His presence<sup>1</sup>.—“*In it the believer hath access to the Father,*”<sup>2</sup> as one that brings a petition to a Prince is called into His presence-chamber.”—Or, by “*chambers,*” may be signified the ordinances of Christ’s house to which the believer is drawn and in which he receives much *joy* and *peace* and *consolation*—sometimes in the prayers or in the praises of God’s house, or in the ministry of His word and celebration of the Holy Sacraments !

The King meets them in His temple—He looks forth upon their souls through the “*window*” of His ordinances, and shews himself through the “*lattice*” of His word and sacrament.

He does not suffer them to stand among the outer court worshippers, but enters into the innermost chamber of their souls—handles their consciences, rebukes, reproves, exhorts, comforts and encourages

1. James iv. 8.

2. Ephea. ii. 18.

them—discloses to them the secrets of His grace : assures them of His love : unfolds to them the mysteries of His kingdom : and shewing them *“ things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath entered into the heart of man to conceive ”*—fills their souls with joy and peace unspeakable and full of glory.

Is it not so ? Hath not your King, even Jesus, *“ drawn you ”*—yea, *“ caused you to come into His chambers,”* and there in the *“ breaking of bread ”*—(yes, perhaps when sin and sorrows manifold were well nigh breaking your burdened hearts,) made himself known to you—given you such a sight of Himself—bleeding—weeping—agonizing—for you :—but now exalted—interceding for you : that you have felt all your sorrows vanish where your sins have long before gone : your soul has been filled with joy.—*“ The King hath brought me into His chamber ”*—*“ I will be glad and rejoice ”*—*Blessed happy believer*—these spiritual chambers of Christ’s presence and love, are but types of those chambers—*“ those many mansions ”* in His Father’s house which He is gone to prepare ! These joys are but like the grapes of Eshcol !—They are but the foretastes of those *“ exceeding riches of his grace,”* which, in the ages to come, ye shall for ever enjoy !

*“ Even now,”* saith the Apostle, *“ He hath raised*

*us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."*<sup>1</sup>

Even *now* we share His honours and grace and glory! Even now we have joy and peace, (not as the world giveth, nor such as the world knoweth of,) but a deep calm of holy joy and expectation, waiting for the full redemption of the soul—to wit—the coming and presence of the King in His Glory! OH! MOST GLORIOUS hour when in the presence of their King, the people of God shall be gathered!—Then, in truth, the King will take them into "*His chambers.*" "*I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.*"<sup>1</sup> They cease from their weary nights of pain—they cease from their long day of toils—they cease from the buffetings of Satan—the unkindness of Saints—the temptations of flesh and blood—

"They sleep in Jesus and are blest,  
How sweet their slumbers are:  
From suffering and from sin released,  
And freed from every care."

But, great as are the privileges of Christ's faithful ones—they must not be thereby lifted up into vain conceits—"What hast thou O Believer! which thou hast not received?" "Now, if thou hast

*received it why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?"* Hast thou indeed come into the King's chambers? Hath He indeed shewn thee such *wonderful* condescension to give thee *access* to His own immediate presence, and admit thee to such close communion and fellowship with himself?

Well, but it is written—"He *hath* BROUGHT *me*." You did not bring yourselves. He caused you to come. He drew you by the cords of love—not because he saw any thing excellent in thee, but because He had a FAVOUR unto thee.

"WE WILL *be glad and rejoice in thee*." JESUS is the OBJECT of the believer's joy. He rejoices not in *himself*: not in his *privileges*: not in his *graces* or *feelings*—but in JESUS only.

And oh! what cause has every ransomed blood-bought soul to rejoice and be glad in JESUS!—HIS PERSON, how *glorious*!—HIS FITNESS, how *complete*!—HIS FULNESS, how *sufficient*!—HIS GLORY, how *incomparable*!

"*The brightness of His Father's glory and the express image of His person.*" "Emmanuel, God with us!"

Oh! who can speak His praises! • What tongue can utter His glories!

Were all created nature suddenly vocal, and unite in one harmonic

1. Psalm xliv. 3.

2. Heb. i.



would but faintly express the *glory* and *worship* and *honour* of Him who once was "*slain for us*," but now at God's right hand sitteth as King for evermore !

Oh ! well may you rejoice and be glad in your King ! It becometh well the righteous to be glad.

*Rejoice that you have a Saviour*—Think of *your sins*—the sin of *nature* inherited—and the sins of childhood, and of youth, and of riper years : secret sins and presumptuous ones : sins of ignorance and of negligence : of omission and wilfulness. Remember that the *penalty* of *one* sin is Eternal Death. Remember without shedding of blood, there is no "*remission of sin*." Have you not good cause then to be glad and rejoice in Jesus as a Saviour? *REJOICE that you have such a Saviour !* Just such an one as we so much needed : one to make atonement for sin ; one to give *peace* to the *troubled* conscience : one to give comfort in *trial* : strength and support in the hour of darkness : and in the valley of the shadow of death to be your *guide*.

*He has done great things for His people, whereof they are and must be glad.*

*He engaged as their surety in the everlasting covenant.*

In the fulness of time He came :—assumed their very nature—endured the penalty due to sin—

carried their griefs—bore their sorrows—made full and sufficient atonement for their sins—reconciled their God—purchased their redemption—SECURED their calling and election—and now He is gone to prepare Heaven for *their* reception—and sends forth His Spirit to prepare them for its glories. Now He is interceding for them on the throne of His Father—where *now* he condescends to call Himself “brother,” “husband,” “friend,” “their everlasting Father,” their “all in all.”

Oh! is it any wonder that they should rejoice and be glad in such a Saviour—such a King “*I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in the God of my salvation.*”

It is your PRIVILEGE, nay, your DUTY to REJOICE in your King and His SALVATION. I say your duty, for Jesus your *King* and *Saviour*, by His Apostle, St. Paul, COMMANDS you to rejoice—“*rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice.*”<sup>1</sup>

Oh! beware of trifling with any of Christ's commands. This is *one* of them:—“*Rejoice a'way in the Lord.*”

You may be *feeble ; tempted ; tried ; cast down*—be it so. Are you God's child? Do you know Jesus and the power of His grace? Well! even *you*—OPPRESSED—tempted and tried Believers are commanded to “rejoice”

1. Phil. iv. 4.

Oh! yes, Christian, if any man has cause for joy,  
YOU more than all!

However deep your trials! or trying your circumstances! you may REJOICE and be GLAD in Christ your Saviour. All things are yours, if YE are Christ's.—Amidst all the changes and chances of this mortal life—amidst dying friends: broken bonds: empty cisterns: cold looks: rude manners: cruel betrayers: oh! to rejoice in Jesus! “*In Him all fulness dwells.*”<sup>1</sup> All that a poor redeemed sinner wants for time and eternity, to make Him HOLY and HAPPY and RICH and CONTENTED: to present Him faultless before the throne of Christ (*without spot or blemish,*) PARDONED, ACCEPTED, and RIGHTEOUS—all He has in Jesus! Oh! that you may realize THIS! Oh! that Jesus may manifest Himself to your soul! Oh! that all may see His excellency—rejoice in His beauty—and so be lifted up above the poor perishing, dying, creature-comforts, as to rejoice and be glad in our King and Saviour!

But there be some who read these words whose joy I could wish turned into mourning and sorrow and lamentations—Ah! your joy is like the “crackling of thorns under a pot.”<sup>2</sup> I could wish your present joy turned into wailing and grief!

My heart is pained for you, for the Lord tells

1. Col. i. 19.

2. Ecc. vii. 6.

you "*Blessed are they that mourn.*"—Ah! if you *die*, as you are now—you will weep and mourn for eternity!

With a deadly disease poisoning your life-blood, with the sentence of death written on your very body, you are yet living in pleasure and and jollity—though Christless! But you will mourn one day when you "LOOK ON HIM whom you have pierced!" You will weep then, when you CRY TO THE ROCKS to fall upon you! Oh! most MISERABLE men—who have no Christ to be glad and rejoice in! *Unhappy*—MOST UNHAPPY men who have Christ and the wine of his joy set before you—yet will not come to Him! You prefer the wine-cups of the world which make men's souls drunk with its lies and deceits, to the wine of Christ's vineyard!

And wilt thou poor worldling, despise Jesus *still*? Again He calls thee—AGAIN invites thee—"come weary Sinner come!"

*How fearful* their doom, when Christ leaves Christless souls to themselves—saying "*Not one of those that were bidden shall taste!*"<sup>1</sup> Believe me, though the *Gospel of Salvation* be indeed "*GLAD TIDINGS*" now—it will assuredly bring the heaviest tidings to them who neglect it hereafter. *None sink so deep* into hell as those who stumble over

1. Luke xiv. 24.

broken, slain, and pierced Christ: with the sound of His Gospel ringing in their ears—as they fall headlong into the bottomless pit!

“*The upright love Thee!*”

The notion which Holy Scripture gives us of the “*upright*,” is that of a *person* who is in the *right way*: and who walks straight along that way. It pre-supposes and indeed positively affirms that once they were “*out of the way*.”—“*There is none upright among men.*”<sup>1</sup>

“*God made man upright*,”—“*but man found out many inventions*”<sup>2</sup>—(sinful as well as foolish,) a sufficient proof, surely, that man is not upright as when he walked with God in the cool of the evening.

As the Ninth Article of the Church of England says, “*he is very far gone from original righteousness*,”—“*quam longissime distet*,”—as far gone as possible. This is an humbling confession. You are ready to protest against such a statement. But it is the *solemn* truth of Holy Scripture—and a truth which must be experienced by every soul that would attain to everlasting life.

But is it not possible for a man to be “*upright*,” even though He hath not one spark of God’s Holy Spirit in his soul? Are there not instances of persons destitute of grace exhibiting withal some kind

1. Micah vii. 2.

2. Ecc. vii. 29.

of uprightness in their conduct and character? This cannot be denied. God himself bears witness of Abimelech, the King of Gerar—that what he did in the matter of taking Sarah, He did in the *uprightness* of his heart.—“*I know thou didst this in the integrity of thine heart.*”<sup>1</sup>

But this Abimelech, was not of THE “*upright.*” His uprightness, though very admirable, was not that which God accepteth. “*The Lord seeth not as man seeth.*”

There are *two grand defects in the uprightness* of a mere moral person—which distinguishes it from *Gospel* or *Evangelical* uprightness.—It springs from a *wrong source* and it aims at a *wrong end*.

It springs from “*an unrenewed heart.*”—This mars all the beauty of a *moral man’s uprightness*. Naaman was a *great* man with his master and honourable: he was also a mighty man of valour—BUT he was a Leper. His leprosy spoiled all else. And so with these, they are very fair in the eyes of the world, very profitable to those whom they associate with—BUT they are *Christless—graceless* persons. “They are more profitable for *this world* than the next.”—And even of this boast, for it is God’s restraining grace—own *inherent* love for that which *that leads them to do the thing which*

1. Gen. xx. 6.

So God said to Abimelech, "*I also withheld thee from sinning against me.*"

*Moral uprightness* is defective also in another respect—"it falls short of the right object."

The Apostle's *aim* OUGHT to be the aim of every professor—"Whatever ye do—do all to the Glory of God."<sup>1</sup>

It is *indispensably* necessary to make you truly *upright* before the Lord, that *the glory of God* be the chief end and object of your *every day's* life. And as St. Paul tells us—"We must have grace from God if we are to aim at God."<sup>2</sup> He tells us there (i) "*that the uprightness which is acceptable to God, is that which brings forth the fruits of righteousness to the praise of God.*" i. e. where the *glory* of God is the end of all our actions; and (ii) "*That such fruit cannot be produced but by Jesus Christ.*" In other words, that the soul must be planted *in Christ*, before it can thus *sincerely* and *uprightly* bear fruits of righteousness to the praise and glory of God.

The Apostle says—"These fruits of righteousness are by Jesus Christ." What men do *by* themselves, they do *for* themselves. They eat of the fruit of their own labours and bless themselves in their own souls.

But, the soul of the Believer, who loves the Lord

1. I. Cor. x. 31.

2. Phil. i. 10—11.

**Jesus Christ, doth all for Christ, by Christ, and to Christ.**

Now, if this be so:—if *unregenerate* man may have a certain *uprightness* of soul which commends them to the world, oh! how careful should Christ's people be, lest they *be put to shame* by those who neither have grace nor care to make much profession in Christ's name. Shall the *graceless* man walk *uprightly* with his neighbour? scorn to be found guilty of a falsehood? be faithful to his promise? be upright in his dealings? And shall Christ's disciples be found wanting in these things. Shall a Christian's *promise* be found *worthless*? a Christian's word *false*? a Christian's dealing with his *neighbour* over-reaching? God forbid it! Because of *these things* the Word of God is blasphemed by the ungodly. *Verily, verily*, except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of such as these, you make your boast of *uprightness* in vain.

You suffer the Christless man, in his moral uprightness of heart to exceed you in the doing of those things, which, *when done*, leaves him short of Christ and *Heaven*!

Christians, how should you *watch and pray*, lest peradventure you put words into the mouths of the wicked to *reprove us* withal! They cannot *reprove* you but they also *reprove your Blessed and Master*! How should we take good



to our *walk* and *conversation* before the ~~world~~, lest we bring reproach on the name and cause of Jesus! The world sees not the Christian in his closet. It knows not his close walk with God in secret. These things it laughs to scorn. But it watches him in his dealings and engagements with itself and children. It listens to our words, when in matters of duty and business we are compelled to have dealings with it, and judges us and *our profession of Christ* accordingly.

Oh! how careful then should you be that it may have no *real ground* of speaking evil of the ways of God: but that through evil report and good report you may be found upright before men, "having a conscience void of offence both toward *man* and *God*."<sup>1</sup>

The *uprightness* mentioned here is peculiar to those, *and those only* who *love Christ*. "*The upright love Thee*." This is *the evidence* of their being truly upright. Gospel uprightness hath its peculiar marks of excellence, just as the uprightness of graceless souls hath its *peculiar* defects. Was that defective both in its beginning and its end? This is excellent both in its end and its beginning. The Spirit of the Lord is its *spring*—the glory of Christ Jesus is its great aim and object.<sup>2</sup>

Now this "*Godly sincerity*" of which the Apostle

1. Acts xxiv. 16.

2. 2 Cor, i, 12.

speaks, exactly answers to the uprightness of our text. And he says concerning it, that it is by the "*grace of God*." It is "*godly*" because it comes from *God*, and leads to *God*. It is not of flesh and blood, neither by the will of man—but of *God*—and not only of *God*, as we may say of all other things. This *uprightness* of heart is the *special* gift—the *covenant-gift* of *God*.<sup>1</sup> This "*one heart*" is the "*godly sincerity*" of which St. Paul speaks, and the "*uprightness*" of which Solomon speaks. It is opposed to the *double heart* of the hypocrite: to the *subtle* and *crooked* policy of the world. It is the "*single eye*" of which our Master tells us "*the which if a man hath, his whole body is full of light.*"<sup>2</sup>

This uprightness is distinguished also from the uprightness of the mere *moral* man in respect of its great aim and object. Its great desire is to please Christ Jesus, and to live for *His glory*. Its great aim is not to obtain the favour of the world, but the *favour* of Him who created us by his word, and redeemed us by his blood.

Hence, David (Ps. cxxv. 4.) i. e. whose hearts are *straight* with God: who desire to serve Him with an upright purpose of soul: who live by Faith on *Christ Jesus*, and whose words and actions are *without dissimulation*—"Israelites INDEED in whom there is no guile."

1. Ex. xi. 19.

2. Mat. vi. 22.

"*The upright LOVE Thee.*" It is equally true that Christ *loves* the *upright*. Solomon tells us so.<sup>1</sup> How great is this expression Brethren: God "*DELIGHTETH in the upright.*" His soul takes pleasure in the upright man as one in whom he sees his own glorious *image* reflected.

God has put peculiar honour in Holy Scripture on men of this character. He has marked them out as men of *no common* character.

Speaking of Job's *uprightness*, God marks him out as one unequalled. "*None like him in the earth, a perfect man and upright.*"<sup>2</sup> Mention is made of his *wealth*, and his *greatness*, and his *power*, but when God glorieth over Satan in having such a servant, he makes mention only of this. He does not say "Hast thou considered my servant Job, none so *rich*, so *princely*, so *honourable*" but, none so "UPRIGHT!"

See again what a *monument of glory* God hath erected to his servant *Caleb*—"But my servant *Caleb*"<sup>3</sup> And why was Caleb thus distinguished above the host of Israel? "*Because he had another Spirit in him*"—a nobler and more excellent spirit than they all. And *wherein* did this appear? "*He followed the Lord FULLY.*" By referring to Joshua 14th c. 7—9 v. you will find that it was the *upright-*

1. Pro. xi, 20.

2. Job i. 8.

3. Num. xiv, 24.

*ness of his heart*—the *righteousness* of his eye to God's glory, which drew from the Holy One of Israel such commendation. Twelve spies had been sent out to spy out the land of Canaan, and bring again their report. After forty days they return to the camp of Israel, bearing a *cluster of grapes* and other fruits of the land. They reported that the land was good, but the people *strong* and *mighty*, and moreover they dwelled in walled cities. The other ten who went with him suited their report to the feelings and prejudices of Israel. But Caleb brought word to Moses as it was in his heart. With *uprightness* and *sincerity* of soul he spake what he believed to be *true*; and hence God greatly honoured him, and *as long as Holy Scripture is read and loved—as long as God's name is feared upon earth* THIS shall be testified of the uprightness of Caleb "*that he followed the Lord fully and spake that which was in his heart!*"

Christian Reader, do you not feel reproved by this upright Jew? Does not his *boldness* and *sincerity* condemn you? Have you not sometimes found yourself afraid of man's wrath and man's frown? Instead of walking and speaking with sincerity and uprightness of soul, we have *walked* and *spoken* as if afraid of the truth. Forgetting God's presence, you have trembled at the opinion and opposition of a *poor sinful* world that lieth in wickedness. Oh! for

that grace which flourished in Caleb's soul, that we might always *act* upon the light and truth we already possess ! Pray for more light to see distinctly the *mind* and *will* of God—and when you see it, act upon it resolutely, leaving all the *consequences* to God !

Dear Christian Believer, if God, even thy God, hath blessed thy soul with this *grace* of uprightness, if He hath adorned thee with this crown and diadem—He hath honoured thee greatly, forasmuch as He hath given thee a “heart after God's heart.” Nothing makes a soul more like God, than *sincerity* and uprightness of soul. God is a God of *truth*, and He *glories* in truth.

When therefore God, by His blessed Spirit, gives truth and *sincerity of heart* to a Believer's soul, He clothes it with His own clothing—as it is written, “Who clothes himself with *truth* and *righteousness* as a garment.” But take heed of *resting* in that uprightness. Forget not that it is the free grace of a gracious God, who only causeth thee to differ from the unregenerate and the hypocrite. If the Holy Ghost were to leave thee, where would be thy truth and uprightness ?

Shall the axe boast itself against the tree which it casteth down ?—or shall the *vessel of gold* exult over the earthenware pot ? What can the *axe* do without the workman's *arm* and *hand* ?—and hath

not the *artificer* all the praise as well for the golden vase as the earthen dish? Beloved, if thy soul be upright, and if in the uprightness of thine heart thou hast been able to resist the Devil, and triumph over temptations before which others have fallen—remember, “The Lord is thy strength, and therefore let Him be thy song.”—“*Not unto us O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name be the Glory.*”

But suppose your heart testifies against you, Reader, concerning this matter—that it is *not upright* before the Lord. What then? The day and the hour cometh, when every secret of thine heart will be made manifest: when those *awful* books will be opened by *One* who hath the power to break the *seals*—and authority to judge the living and the dead! Oh! how *vainly* thou wilt cry out to the *mountains* and *hills* to fall upon thee, and hide thee from the *wrath* of the Lamb! Oh! what a *word* will that be, at the last, when thou shalt cry out for *mercy*, and the Lord saith—“*I know thee not! Thou art not one of mine! Thy soul never loved me in uprightness.*”

Surely Sinner, if “Joseph’s Brethren were confounded when he said to them, “*I am Joseph whom ye sold*”—if they could not endure his presence or his voice; how *intolerable* will the voice of the Lord, the Judge be.” “*I am Jesus whom thou hast mocked with thy false-hearted profession of love!*”

*"I am Jesus whom thou hast pierced with thy sins!"*  
*"I am Jesus to whom thou hast preferred the world's*  
*gains, and pleasures, and good name!"* *"I am*  
*Jesus whom thou didst sell for the enjoyment of*  
*thine own lusts!"* *"Depart thou cursed one to thine*  
*own place of torment, prepared for the Devil and*  
*his Angels!"*

But *"Unto the upright shall there arise light in darkness,"* yea, the *"generation of the upright shall be blessed!"*<sup>1</sup>

5. *I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem,*  
*as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon.*

The two last clauses of this verse answer to the two first—thus: *"I am black (O ye daughters of Jerusalem) as the tents of Kedar, but comely as the curtains of Solomon."*

This may seem an exaggerated paradox, but it is the language of sober truth and experience. Let us examine the description which the Church gives of herself in answer, perhaps to some such objection as *"Who art thou that shouldest pretend to have any such Royal Bridegroom, and layest claim to such high privileges?"* To whom the Church answers in the spirit of Him, who by grace could say

1. Psalm cxii. 4.

*"I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."*<sup>1</sup> *"I am black"* (by sin and nature) *"as the tents of Kedar,"* *"but comely"* (by grace and the righteousness of Christ) *"as the curtains of Solomon."*

By the *"daughters of Jerusalem"* who are frequently mentioned in this Song, we may understand *young converts*, whose knowledge was but small, and their experience only that of babes. They are noted constantly as being the companions and friends of the Church of Christ. To these she gives this character of herself, and the *reason* for doing so seems to be for the purpose of removing the objections which might have arisen in their minds respecting her.

The condition of Christ's people in this world is often one of great offence to young Believers. They cannot understand why God's people should be an afflicted people, while *"the wicked flourish as green bay trees."* Neither can we wonder that the *inconsistencies* and *failings* and *infirmities* of the righteous prove to them almost insurmountable barriers. The Church of Christ, therefore, by an act of Faith glories in her Grace, as well as acknowledges her natural corruptness—*"I am black, &c."* These words are expressive of the spiritual complexion and state of every true Believer. Reader, if thy soul has not had like

1. Gal. ii. 20.



*"I am Jesus whom thou hast pierced with thy sins!"*  
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*gains, and pleasures, and good name!"* *"I am*  
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1. Gal. ii. 20.

lifted up the warning voice. "*Mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrines ye have learned, and avoid them.*" Why avoid them? "*Because they are such as serve not the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly ; and by good words and fair speeches, deceive the hearts of the simple.*"<sup>1</sup>

Therefore marvel *not* if ye see the Church of Christ sitting by the rivers of Babylon, sorrowing in her humiliation! Marvel not if, in these latter days, you see the Church of Christ torn with contending passions of evil men, who consider not that they do evil. Thus it must be till the end come. The goats will still be with the sheep—and the wolves in sheeps' clothing. The tares will grow up with the wheat, until *He* shall come, whose fan is already in His hand—whose judgements are already "beginning at the House of God": the first droppings of that fiery shower, which shall consume the ungodly as CHAFF. After that He hath *thoroughly* purged his floor, then will He gather the righteous into His garner—but burn up the wicked in the flames of Hell.<sup>2</sup>

Again, in another sense, may the Church of Christ be said to be "*black*"—because of the *persecutions* and *reproaches* of the WORLD, which "every one who will live a *godly* life" must suffer. The

1. Rom. xvi. 18.

2. Mat. iii. 12.

days of reproach and shameful mockings are passed away from the Church of Christ. She is honoured, outwardly at least. St. Paul, were he to appear among men now, would be admired and courted by all. But yet it is as *true* now, as it was when he wrote to Timothy, "*that they that will live godly in Christ will suffer persecution.*"<sup>1</sup> The Apostle's remark is in the most *general* form. It is applicable, in an equal degree, to all ages. True, *Christians* now-a-days pass among men with but little *reproach* and *persecution*. But wherefore? Is it not because they do not live *GODLY* in Christ Jesus? They surrender their *principles* to the world—they yield up every point where the world really opposes them—they join in the world's *fashions*, and the world's *amusements*, and the world's *vanities*—they take up the world's *language*, and fall in with the world's *schemes*—until the *world* recognises in them its own children. It loves, and even sometimes rejoices over them. And though it crucified their Master and persecuted His Apostles, it sees in these modern Disciples of the lowly Jesus, so little resemblance to Him—so little conformity to His will and example—as to let them pass on, free from reproach and persecution. Is it not true? Do we not feel it, and condemn it in our own selves? Do we not see it, and lament it as *one* of the saddest marks of

1. II. Tim. iii. 12.

the present age, that the professing Church of Christ has come so near the world—joined in its unhallowed alliances—countenanced its ungodly practices—palliated its unscriptural views: and the world has come so near the Church—imitated so ingeniously its spirit—learned so accurately its doctrines—clothed itself so deceitfully with mock garments of its Righteousness—that it needs a *practised* eye and a *skilful discerner* of real character, to distinguish the Worldly Professor from the Child of God.

Nevertheless the record is true, “*They that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution.*” Yes, and it is equally true that such as *do* live godly in Christ Jesus, *do* suffer persecution, in one form or another, for Righteousness sake. Some may suffer in one form—some in another. The peculiar situation of each in this life may be favourable or otherwise to the service of Christ Jesus. But all in some degree, who do *truly* aim at living godly in Christ, must “*through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom.*”

Reader, possibly you are one of those who are just entering upon the service of Christ Jesus. In the real spirit of one “who loveth much,” you will have many trials. Worldly friends will oppose—worldly professors will mock—they do not understand your motive. They will tempt you by the *world*—or they will allure you by pleasures—or

make you ashamed with ridicule—to turn aside from following Jesus. All this, and much more, you must expect to meet with; but count it joy because it is written, “*Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.*”<sup>1</sup>

If the world, and the professing Church, crucified your Master—wonder not that they despise His Disciple. It *hates* true gospel religion, be sure, with a most bitter hatred, *Sit down, therefore, and count your cost*, Believer. Heaven and Hell are before you! The way of Christ—the way of life—is in the “strait and narrow way.” Destruction from the presence of the Lord, is the certain result of walking in the *broad way* of the world! You will have trials in the way Christ would lead you. Reproach and scorn will be yours, more or less. Your name may be cast out as evil: your motives, perhaps, questioned—your sincerity doubted—your perseverance to the end, declared impossible. You may be told that you are “*over-righteous*”—*doing more than you need*: “OVER-SCRUPULOUS”—*going less unto the world than you might*: “*over-serious*”—to an extent quite inconsistent with the joy of gospel religion. Heed them not. These are but a small part of the trials which Jesus

1. James i. 12.

endured for your soul. He says to you this moment, as of old he said to another, "*If any will be my Disciple let him take up his Cross daily and follow me.*" "*Let the dead bury their dead—follow thou me.*"<sup>1</sup> It is the true spot of the child of God, if persecutions and afflictions are your lot for the cause of Christ. It is the confessions of the Church of Christ, and of every true Believer within that Church, "*I am black.*"

Nevertheless, though the Church confess herself "to be black"—"dark as the early dawn;" and that because of her *sins* and infirmities—heresies and divisions—reproaches and *cruel mockings*—still she declares herself to be "*comely*," (through the grace imparted to her), "*as the curtains of Solomon*," which being made of fine linen and richly embroidered tapestry, were a strong contrast to the black goat-hair tents of the sons of Ishmael.

Every Believer in Jesus is "*comely*" in the eyes of his reconciled God and Father, "through the Righteousness of Jesus." Such comeliness is indeed hidden from the world. It sees no beauty in them to commend them. It regards them as "*black*," *uncomely, melancholy*, half-witted persons. But not so their Lord and Master. They are very comely in His eyes. Precious in His sight is even

1. Mat. xvi. 24.

the death of His Saints—but much more their lives of Faith.

But how, and in what respects, can the Church of Christ say—“*I am comely?*”

(i.) The Church of Christ, and every individual Member, is comely in God’s sight, by the Righteousness of Jesus Christ. “*He was made sin for us, who knew no sin: that we might be made the Righteousness of God in Him.*”<sup>1</sup> Jesus himself “*bare our sins, in His own body, on the tree*”<sup>2</sup> He became flesh, by taking on Himself a body of humiliation—and thus was able to fulfil those purposes of Grace which God had “devised, whereby His banished ones might not be expelled”<sup>3</sup> from Him. Jesus “lived an exile’s life, endured an exile’s shame, died an exile’s death, was buried in an exile’s tomb”—and that to work out a Righteousness for His people, in which they might be clothed—that their uncomeliness should not appear. He took our place of *banishment*, that we might take *His place* in His Father’s house. He stooped to our place of *shame*, that we might rise to His place of honour and glory.

And to every believing penitent, this Righteousness of the God-man Christ Jesus—divine and perfect—*suitable* and sufficient—is *reckoned* and *imputed* as

1. II. Cor. v. 21.

2. I. Peter, ii. 24.

3. II. Sam. xiv. 14.



if it were their own. "Christ hath merited Righteousness for as many as are found in Him. And then, although we be altogether *sinful* and *unrighteous*: yet, even the man which is in himself impious—full of iniquity—full of sin" ("black as the tents of Kedar:") him being found in Christ, through Faith: him God beholdeth with a gracious eye, putteth away his sin, by not imputing it, taketh away the punishment due thereto, by pardoning it—and accepteth him in Jesus Christ, as perfectly righteous as if he had fulfilled the whole law." "*For he hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin: that we might be made the Righteousness of God in Him.*"<sup>1</sup>

"Such are we in the sight of God the Father, as is the very Son of God himself. Let it be counted folly, or frenzy a fury whatsoever. It is our wisdom and our comfort. We care for no knowledge in the world but this—that man *hath sinned*, and GOD hath suffered: that God hath made Himself the *sin* of men, and that men are made the Righteousness of God." These are glorious truths—worthy of the man who penned them\*—worthy of the Church which nourished him within her fold! Well might the great Luther say, concerning this doctrine, that "it was the doctrine of a *standing*,

1. II. Cor. v. 21.

• Richard Hooker.

or *falling* Church." Our text assures us that it is the *life* and the *glory* of every Believer. It is their *boast*—their joy—their present comfort, and the foundation of all their future hopes—that they are made the Righteousness of God, in Christ Jesus ; and Christ is made to them, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption. Though "black" by sin, reproach, infirmity, and short-coming—yet are they "*comely*,"—" *Having washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*" Though black as the tents of Kedar, having lain among the pots of earthliness and sin—yet, by grace, is every Believer fair as the wings of a *dove* covered with *silver*, and her feathers with *yellow* gold : yea, comely as the curtains of Soloman, for beauty and richness.

Reader, as thine eye glances over these lines, turn thine inward eye upon thine own heart and conscience. Pause one moment. Put one question home to thy soul. Am I a justified soul in Christ Jesus ? Can I take up the language of the Spouse of Christ ? Soul, hast thou been bowed down to the lowest dust before God, for thine own deep sin before conversion—thy sad falls and thy many backslidings after ? Has God's Spirit ever taught thee to feel and say, from thine innermost soul, "*I am black ?*" Hast thou been also convinced of Righteousness, so that, without presumption, thou canst take up the language of the

Church and add—" *Yet am I comely*" as *the curtains of Solomon*.

Oh! it is indeed a matter of great concernment, to have an experience of these Truths. Am I reconciled to God, through the blood of Jesus Christ? Am I a *pardoned* sinner? Is my soul at peace with God? If called this moment to die, could I with old Simeon say—" *Lord now lettest thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy Word: for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation?*"<sup>1</sup> Or if this moment the *trump of the Arch-angel* and the *voice of God* should be heard; and the shouts of Angels, and the wailing of the wicked, and the Resurrection of the Saints, were suddenly to proclaim the coming of Jesus in Glory—could you rejoice to meet Him? Where should you stand—on the *right* hand or on the *left*? Among the justified and comely Saints, who shall be caught<sup>2</sup> up into the clouds, and so be for ever with the Lord—or among the lost Spirits, doomed for EVER to be separate from the presence of Jesus, and the home of the Righteous?

Consider dear Reader, I beseech you, as in Christ's stead—I do implore you consider—that *precious* blood has been shed, even the blood of the God-man, for the end and purpose of reconciling God to thee and making it possible for God (*i.e.* consisent with

1. Luke ii. 29.

2. I. Thes. iv. 17.

His attributes of holiness and justice) to look upon thy soul with mercy and love! Oh consider this record of God's love! Believe it! Clasp it to thy bosom! Oh! let not this blood cry out for vengeance neglected and despised! "The blood of Abel" we read "cried out to the Almighty from the ground for vengeance"<sup>1</sup> much more shall the blood of him who was the fellow of the Lord of Hosts!

Verily, verily, I declare to you, *careless* and heedless children of the world, it had been better that ye had never seen the light of Heaven, better that ye had never listened to the *sad* yet *blessed* story of Bethlehem and Calvary, and *yet* be guilty after all—of despising the very body and blood of the blessed Jesus! Oh! by the *tears* He shed, by the *scorn* He meekly endured, by the groans and sorrows of His troubled spirit, by the nails that pierced Him and the thorns that tore His sacred flesh—be entreated, if still ignorant of Jesus and His salvation by personal acquaintance and experience—give not sleep to your eyes—give not slumber to your eyelids, before you have tested the faithful promises of your God. "*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is*

1. Gen. iv. 10.

*light.*" Then you shall be able to declare—"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels."

Again, the Church of Christ is *comely* by the *sanctifying grace* of the Holy Ghost, which is given to them who believe.

If any man therefore be in Christ he is a "*new creature.*" The image of Jesus is imprinted on the man's soul. He is made partaker of the divine nature—He is conformed to Christ's will. He is made holy by the operation of the Holy Ghost. His *tastes* and *desires*, and *pleasures*, and *enjoyments*, all are regulated by the new principle of "*holiness to the Lord.*"

A true Christian therefore is "*comely*" in the Lord's eyes, because he is a holy Christian. He is "*a temple of the Holy Ghost—a consecrated shrine of the Deity—the dwelling place of the Holy One.*" He is adorned with the graces of the Holy Spirit which are well-pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ.

I say it is given to them that *believe*: and observe this I pray you Reader. Carefully distinguish between these two—*justification* and *sanctifica-*

1. Mat. xi. 27—29.

2. Isaiah lxi. 10.

*tion!* These, though indissolubly connected, are yet *separate*. Justification is the perfect work of Christ, wrought *out* of us by Him. Sanctification is the work of the Holy Ghost in our souls, wrought in us, by His dwelling in us, but *imperfect* in this world because of our corrupt natures. The one is the *work* of Christ for us—the other the work of the Spirit of Christ within us. The former gives us a *title* to Heaven—the latter imparts to us a *meetness for* Heaven. Justifying faith removes the *guilt* of sin: sanctifying grace destroys its power over us and its pollution in us.

Reader, what hath Christ done for thee in this matter? Hast thou faith? Doth thy faith work by love? Is it the faith of God's elect, which consists not in word only, but in power? It is an easy thing to say "I have faith"—But "Devils also believe"<sup>1</sup> (and more than many professors reach unto)—"they also tremble"—tremble at God's word and judgments: tremble at their own doom and ruin eternal! But this I ask of thee, Reader, is thy faith in Jesus, such as "purifieth"<sup>2</sup> thy heart and purgeth it of its naughtiness and desperate wickedness?

Is it a faith which hath received the Holy Ghost and which enables you to "live a life of faith" in the midst of perverse and godless men—and among hollow and worldly professors?

1. James ii. 19..

2. Acts xv. 9.

No matter how high and holy be your doctrines of grace, if your life and habits and conversation—be *low*, carnal, and world-like.

No fall so *deep* as that of high professors! Therefore consider it is written “*Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.*”

6. *Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me: my mother's children were angry with me; they made me keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept.*

The Church, which is the spouse of Christ, continues in these words her address to the *daughters of Jerusalem*. She explains the *cause* of her blackness, and deprecates every unkind judgement from her external condition.

(I.) The Church desires the daughters of Jerusalem to forbear looking upon her.

(II.) Assigns some reasons for this request: and

(I.) “*Look not upon me, because I am black.*”

There is much conveyed in a mere look. Not a single word may be spoken, but the look may speak volumes. In what sense then do we suppose that the Church here desires that the daughters of Jerusalem should not look upon her? Is she insensible

to a look of *sympathy*, or a look of *pity* on her behalf? Not so, surely. This would be uncivil and unamiable. This spirit would be contrary to the spirit of Him who is pleased even with a cup of cold water. Grace neither makes men churlish in their feelings, or unkind in their looks. Where is the *proud*, churlish follower of Jesus? Let such an one hear Christ's words:—"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart."<sup>1</sup>

The language employed here deprecates a look of *scornful disdain*.

Conscious is every Believer of many *infirmities* and *sins*, which mar the consistency of his or her Christian character, and which gives the world occasion to speak evil of the name of Jesus and the people on whom He has set his love. Every one who loves the Lord will watch against every occasion which can *justly* give the world any *real ground* for bringing railing accusation against the Gospel. Not that you can escape the scorn of an unbelieving world. If you will serve Christ Jesus with sincerity, you must be contented "to be sprinkled with a few drops of that torrent of contempt and shame which was poured out like a flood upon Him."

But there is a vast difference between bearing *reproach* and *scorn* for the name of Christ, and

1. Mat. xi. 29.



suffering as an *evil-doer*—as an inconsistent and undecided follower of Him who was *holy, harmless and undefiled*.

Blessed is that Disciple who is looked on with *contempt* and *scorn* for the name of Jesus!

Rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings! The spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you! But oh! if there be a pitiable sight, enough to make angels weep, it is to see an *inconsistent, faithless, worldly* professor making a gain of godliness—having the *form* but denying the *power* of Christ's Gospel. "Enemies they are of the Cross of Christ—whose God is their belly—whose glory is in their *shame*—who mind earthly things."

This language being addressed to the daughters of Jerusalem, in its most general application speaks to professors, and cautions them not to look with *disdain* on Believers in Jesus—who, though "rich in faith," are "poor" after the flesh, or because of their *failings* and *imperfections* of life. It may seem a *needless* caution, but it is one which the Apostle gives—"Be not high-minded, but condescend to men of low estate."<sup>1</sup> A proud disdainful Christain! It is a contradiction in terms. Yet are there not some who loudly profess Christ—who yet think it beneath their dignity to sit at the same table and join in the same society for doing good, because

1. Rom. xii. 16

they must meet with those whose rank of life, and station in society, they consider inferior to themselves? Cometh this, Brethren, from Christ? Is it not a leaven of the old man—a spice of that abominable thing which God hates—PRIDE? But the professor is also cautioned not to look with *disdain* on Christ's Church, because of their failings and imperfections. Ah! it is a sad *proof* of great declension in spirituality, when a professing Disciple of Jesus takes pleasure in reproachfully entreating a fellow Christain for his failings and infirmities! How sad to hear the uncharitable tongues of the backbiter and busy-body enlarging, with evident delight, on the failings of some servant of God!

Is this like Christ, who, (when they brought to him a sinner, and were loud in their accusations against her)—rebuked them all, saying “*He that is perfect among you let him cast the first stone.*”<sup>1</sup> Is this like St. Paul, who “wept over the enemies of the Cross of Christ?”<sup>2</sup> Take heed, I charge you, how you look with disdain on any tempted, failing, child of God! Consider yourselves! you are yet in the BODY and therefore liable to fall also.

Consider Jesus in His conduct towards his *fallen, faithless* Peter! Thrice with *oaths* and *cursing* he had denied his Lord—Did Jesus rebuke him before all?

1. Jno. viii. 7.

2. Phil. iii. 18.

They were in the *same* room together. Jesus before the *tribunal*, Peter with the Servants. Now was the time you would say to reprove this faithless treacherous follower. But, what said Jesus?—Peter had been loud in his curses and bold in his denial. Jesus was silent. We read, (and oh! they are touching thrilling words) “*The Lord turned and looked upon Peter!*”<sup>1</sup> Oh! what a *look* must that have been. Who can describe that thrilling look, which, unseen by others, pierced the soul of Peter!

What volumes did that *look* speak to the already bursting heart of Peter!

“The Lord *looked!*”.....We must wait till we meet with Peter in *Glory*, that he may tell us of that *look*! He looked upon Peter, and that single glance of his eye—like an arrow, pierced Peter’s soul. He remembered the word of the Lord, and “*went out and wept bitterly*”

Learn then from the Saviour not to *look with* scorn and disdain on your brethren in Christ, who like Peter, may fall into the hands of the great *Sifter* and be sifted like wheat. Look with the eye of *pity* on such an one, remembering yourselves also, lest ye be tempted.

But, in another sense, the Church of Christ saith, “*Look not upon me,*” viz. after a *curious, prying*

1. Luke xxii. 16

fashion: looking into her failings and searching out her *imperfections*.

She warns the daughters of Jerusalem against a practice so dishonorable to religion and so contrary to His Spirit, who said, "*Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye and considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?*"<sup>1</sup>

Never did Christians need this caution more than they do now. There are not a few, in many respects most admirable, whose *peculiar fort* seems that of discovering the failings of their fellow Christians. Never do they seem so well employed as when they are dissecting the character and delivering their judgement on their brothers in Christ.—Their eyes "*like Vultures' talons fasten upon nothing else save corruption.*"—" *Their tongues are like sharp razors, having the poison of Asps under their lips.*"

Now of all pitiable characters these need the greatest share of compassion and long-suffering.

Generally speaking, such persons are most ignorant of that knowledge for which they are least excusable. They are for the most part stupid in discerning and most careless in correcting their own faults. While they are pulling out *motes* from their brother's eye—they consider not the *beam* that is in their own eye. *Ye hypocrites, &c.*

1. Mat. vii. 3.

(II.) But let us notice some of the *reasons* why the Church desires not to be looked upon. She says (i.) because "*the sun had looked upon her,*" (ii.) "*her mother's children had been angry with her,*" (iii.) "*they had made her the keeper of the vineyards.*"

(i.) "*Look not upon me, because the Sun hath looked upon me.*"

The Jewish Targum explains this passage with reference to the Congregation of Israel, which was made black (figuratively) by their idolatrous worship of the sun and moon. The allusion is of course figurative, alluding to persons in hot countries, whose countenance becomes *dark* and *swarthy* from the heat of the sun.

In Holy Writ, the light and warmth of the sun are used to set forth *the gracious effects* of God's dealings with the soul. The Prophet, speaks of "*The Sun of Righteousness rising with healing on his wings upon them that fear his name.*"<sup>1</sup>

But in other passages we find a very different signification attached.<sup>2</sup> See also the parable of the Sower.<sup>3</sup> It is in this sense, viz. of the Sun of Persecution, trial, and affliction, having caused the Church to look *black*, I understand this expression. It seems to suit the condition of the Church of Christ both past and present.

1. Mal. iv. 2.

2. Ps. cxxi. 7.

3. Mat. xiii. 6.

In all ages, the Church of Christ, and true members of the same, have suffered persecutions, which for *vehemence* and *severity* may well be represented by the scorching rays of an eastern sun.

And dear Believer, is this to be wondered at?—Is it any marvel that the followers of the *Man of Sorrows*, who bare a Cross and was nailed thereon, should in this *respect* somewhat resemble him?

Nay, has not their Master laid on each the command, "*If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.*"<sup>1</sup> The Cross then is the badge of discipleship, Christ hath joined them together. Let not man therefore think to separate them. If you find yourselves at a loss to comprehend the meaning of the language in my text—if you find yourself without this badge of discipleship, if you carry no Cross—if you have no affliction either from without or within: you do well to fear all is not right with your soul.

It is written "*that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.*"<sup>2</sup> But if you have no *tribulation*—if you have never felt the weight of any cross—have you not reason to *suspect* that you have missed your road?

You are gliding gently down the stream: journeying along the *broad* and *easy* road I fear, rather

1. Mat. xvi. 24.

2. Acts xiv. 22.

than roughing the billows of temptation and patiently traversing the rough and thorny road which the Cross-bearer trod.

Marvel not, my Christian Brethren, if sometime or other, under the pressure of chastisement—you should take up the language of this verse, and like *Naomi*, in the bitterness of your soul, say—“*Look not upon me because I am black. The sun of affliction and grief hath scorched me.*” “Call me not *Naomi* (pleasant), but call me *Mara*” (bitter.) In your hour of deepest sorrow, think of *one* who for you, “*was a Cross-bearer from the manger to the Cross.*” Remember Him whose countenance was so marred with grief—more than any man’s. When bowed down with trial, remember “*Jesus of Nazareth the man of sorrows, who was acquainted with grief.*”

His life was indeed a pilgrimage from Bethlehem to Calvary, with the Cross upon his shoulder. Thirty-three years daily acquaintance with grief, made him so familiar with it, that “He can be touched with our infirmities, forasmuch as He was also tempted like as we are, only without sin.”

Think it not therefore strange, if as ye bear His name, ye should also be called to bear his Cross.

The servant is not above his master. If Jesus was made *perfect* through sufferings, wonder not that you should be partakers with him. Nay,

rather rejoice that ye are counted worthy to bear the Cross. Take it and bear it for Jesus' sake ! Take it and count all things but *loss* for the *excellency* of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord.

Endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. Behold we count them happy which endure. Take then the Prophets, and holy men of old, and saints and martyrs, and confessors for an *example* of suffering affliction and patience.

*"Ye have heard of the patience of Job and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy."*<sup>1</sup> The sun of persecution and trial and affliction may scorch your soul, but *forget not* (thou afflicted one,) *forget not*—that the "*great multitude*" which John saw round the *Throne* and before the *Lamb*—who are arrayed in *white robes*, were "*they which came out of great tribulation and who washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb !*"<sup>2</sup>

*"My mother's children were angry with me."*—She had before spoken of outward trials—*Here* she speaks of those of her own household being her foes.—The Jewish Paraphrase undertands by (mother's children,) false prophets and teachers, who taught the people evil ways. But this is limiting the application of the truth only to the Jewish Church. Were the veil taken from off the eyes of

1. James v. 2.

2. Rev. vii. 14.



Israel, they would see the more extensive signification which this portion of God's word bears to the Church of God under the new Covenant.

By the "mother's children," I understand mere *professors* in Christ's church: members of the Church visible: (externally children of the same mother:) pretenders to godliness: "*having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof:*" holding with the most bigoted perversity to the *mere externals* of religion—its forms and outward worship: but having no *real* piety—no *true godliness* of life in themselves and hating it even in others. Hence, "*they made her keeper of the vineyards.*" By "vineyards," may be understood *false churches*: by her keeping them—her falling in with their corrupt worship, and observance of the vain *traditions* and ordinances of man.

And observe, the Church was *obliged* to do this by the influence of those false children. She does it not of her own will, but was forced against her will as it were—"they made me," *i. e.* compelled me against my own will. And this produced a neglect of her own vineyard which she so humbly confesses.

iii. "*Mine own vineyard have I not kept,*"—Every Believer has a part assigned to him in the Lord's vineyard. The Lord says to each "*occupy till I come.*" Not only is the Minister of God to

labour and<sup>d</sup> bear the burden and heat of the day in his Lord's vineyard, "*The Church of the living God,*"—but each Believer has talents, more or less, committed to his stewardship :—grace to exercise :—gifts to use, for the service of his Lord and for the good of his fellow Christians. EACH has a *precious* soul to *discipline* and *keep* for life eternal !

Reader, I plead with you on this behalf. I plead with you for *one* in whom you are most deeply interested—*one* most dear to you—*one* in whose welfare you cannot—you must not be indifferent. I plead with you, before God, for *one* who is ever with you—for *one* who will cleave and cling to you for ever !

One who came into this world with you, and whom, whether ye will or not, you must carry out : who will be with you in the "*hour of death and in the day of judgement.*"

*I plead with you for your own soul !* that *vineyard* which the Lord hath given you to *cultivate* for *eternity*—that *immortal spirit* of life which with all its *mighty* capacities for *good* or *ill*, in the beginning came *from God*.....and with the character here *stamped* upon it.....must again return to the God who gave it.

How mournful at the last, will be the accents in which you shall *lament* your neglect of that vineyard !

I ask not what your vineyard may be. It may be more or less extensive.

It may be too that in addition to your own most *precious* soul—you have been charged with the care of other vineyards.

*Parents* you have the souls of your children. *Teachers* you have the souls of such as are committed to your charge. *Pastors* you have the flock over whom the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers! How solemn the charge, to keep the vineyard which belongeth to each of us!

*Parents*—take heed, that in the last judgement, your little ones do not testify against you, as the murderers of their souls!

*Teachers*—take heed, that you lead those committed to your charge to Christ, or else it had been well for you that you had never seen the light of Heaven!

*Pastors*—Oh! let us “*work the work of Him that hath sent us, while it is yet day: for the night cometh when no man can work.*”<sup>1</sup>—Whatsoever “*our hand findeth to do, let us do it with all our might.*”

People are perishing: and souls are passing to eternity. We go but *once* through this world! We return not again, to recal *neglected opportunities*, or correct *follies* and *mistakes*.

1. John ix. 4.

Oh ! that ministers and people may be made sensible of their mutual responsibilities.

Oh ! that our people would *pray* for their Pastors. Then will God, oven our *own* God bless us ! —Then will the *wilderness* and *solitary places* be glad : and many a *barren desert* soul rejoice and blossom as a rose.

7. *Tell me, O thou, whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon :  
for why should I be as one that turneth  
aside by the flocks of thy companions.*

The Church, though drawn to Christ, still has many wants. Therefore she seeks their supply from her great and good Shepherd. “ *Tell me, oh ! thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest.* ” — Notice then these words—(I) The earnest entreaty of the Church of Christ, “ *Tell me where thou feedest thy flock !* ” (II) The endearing title which she gives to her good Shepherd, “ *Oh ! thou whom my soul loveth.* ” (I) These words imply three things concerning Christ Jesus : that he is a Shepherd ; that he has a flock to feed ; and a place to feed them in.

Holy writ speaks in several places of Christ as a Shepherd of his flock. Thus the Prophet,<sup>1</sup> where

1. Zac. xiii. 7.

the Holy Ghost specially marks Him out as the chosen appointed Shepherd of the Father—" *My Shepherd.*" As such, He died for the sheep, and He will bring their full number into the Father's fold. Not one of them shall be wanting. "*They are His, and none shall pluck them out of His hand.*"<sup>1</sup> He is also called the "*One Shepherd.*"—There are indeed *others*, but they are under-Shepherds, whom the *one* Shepherd, Christ Jesus, employs to feed His flocks. But He is the *one* Shepherd. God the Father will never recognize the claims of any other chief Shepherd. None other can claim the flock, for he purchased it with His own blood.

St. Peter calls Him "*the Chief Shepherd,*"<sup>2</sup> and well does the title become Him, who is God's Shepherd—God's Fellow.

From Him the ministers and Stewards of the Gospel, as under-Shepherds, receive their authority, to teach and admonish and feed the flocks over which He hath appointed them overseers. To Him they will have to render a strict and solemn account. St. Paul also calls Him a "*Great Shepherd*"—great to defend His flock in all dangers, to supply them in all their wants—great in His love, tenderness, and care, so that the flock can say—" *The Lord is my Shepherd, therefore can I*

1. Jchn x 21.

2. I. Peter v. 4.

*lack nothing.*" But lest any thing should be wanted to complete the Scripture Portrait of our Shepherd King, He himself said, in the days of His flesh, "*I am the good Shepherd.*"<sup>1</sup>

Behold then, Brethren, ye that are of the true flock, what a Shepherd ye have to tend you; not only "*God's Shepherd,*"—not only the "*One Shepherd,*"—not only the "*Chief Shepherd,*"—and the "*Great Shepherd,*"—but the "*Good Shepherd.*"

But, if Holy Writ thus sets forth Jesus in the character of a Shepherd, so does it say, that "*He hath a flock to feed.*" And so it is written in the Prophets, "*He shall feed His flock like a Shepherd.*"—"His flock," the people whom He has chosen and on whom He has set His love: whom the Father hath given Him and for whose redemption He paid the price in blood. These know His voice and follow Him, whithersoever he goeth, but the voice of a stranger will they not follow. Now just, as the Shepherd has many titles in Scripture, so also hath his flock. It is called "*a flock of slaughter.*"<sup>1</sup> Zechariah, by the Spirit of Prophecy, spake this concerning the Saints of Christ, of whom St. Paul saith, "*We are killed all the day long, and accounted as sheep for the slaughter.*"

Even now the Great Fowler—our adversary, the

1. Zach. xi. 4.

Devil—goeth to and fro like a hungry lion, and seeking the flock that he may devour them.

St. Luke calls it a "*little flock*,"<sup>1</sup> and so it is, many may be called but *few* chosen. Not every one that hath baptism and outward church communion, hath the electing grace of Jesus Christ in his soul. And let a man be what he may and have every sort of privilege, it shall profit him nothing if his soul be not made the temple of the Holy Ghost.

What think you of this flock? It is true that it is a "*little flock*" and a "*flock of slaughter*." Have you reason to think that you are one of its sheep? If you are, His mark is upon your soul. His blood has been sprinkled upon your heart. You know His voice and follow Him, and His Spirit dwells within you. Is it thus with your soul. Examine and see. Do not take it for granted that you are one of Christ's flock, because you go out among that flock now. Alas! how many baptized hypocrites, like Simon Magus—unsound professors like Ananias—lovers of the world, more than lovers of Christ, like Demas—will be discovered and cast out from the flock in the last gathering of the true sheep.

How many that are now first shall then be last and the last first. Instead of green pastures and

1. Luke xii. 32.

still waters and rivers of brooks of waters from the fountain of life, and the hidden manna, how many will be doomed to feed upon ashes, and drink in for ever and ever the liquid flames of the wrath of God?

If, while your eye rests upon this page, you are conscious that you are not of the flock of Jesus Christ, well may you cry out, from the bottom of your soul—"Tell me O Lord where thou feedest Thy flock: lead me by the way I know not, that I may enter in and be at rest."

But not only hath Christ a flock, but he also feeds them, and this leads us to notice more particularly, the request of the Believer in the text—"Tell me where thou feedest."

In the second verse of the sixth chapter of this Song, we read "*My Beloved is gone down into his garden to the beds of spices, to feed in his garden.*" By "*gardens*," are to be understood the churches of the living God, in which are assembled companies of faithful men, where the word of God is read and preached and the sacraments duly administered, according to Christ's appointment. In these "*gardens*," does Christ feed his flock and provide them with feasts of fat things, even the fatness of His house. He feeds them with Himself, who is the "*Bread of Life*."

Reader, if thou art of the flock and feedest upon



this bread by faith, thou shalt never know hunger again, neither shalt thou taste the second death.—“*His flesh is meat indeed, and His blood is drink indeed.*”<sup>1</sup> He is ever ready to distribute His blessings among the sheep of His pastures. Go to Him oft as thou wilt, thou canst not come once too often: thou art ever welcome. Ask what thou wilt, thou canst not ask too much; too little, thou mayest, perhaps ask, too seldom thou mayest come—but thou canst not come too often, or put up thy petition too largely. Thy Shepherd hath all the power to give. He hath none at all to refuse.

But, the request in my text, may be read, “*Tell me how thou feedest,*” and then the Believer seems to ask *how*—in what manner, by what instrumentality—does “*Christ feed His flock.*” He does so by His ministers, who are His servants, stewards, ambassadors. He puts them in trust with His Gospel, to feed, admonish, and provide for his flock. “*Their office and dignity is very high and weighty.*” They are to teach, premonish, and provide for the Lord’s family, to seek for Christ’s sheep, which are dispersed abroad and for His children which are dispersed abroad in the midst of this mighty world.”

Pause, Reader, and think how great and awful is the responsibility of every minister of Jesus Christ! Think of the difficulties which encompass us. Have

1. John vi. 55.

some compassion for your ministers. They are men of like passions with yourselves. Be more full of charity towards them than censure. Forget not they have a "great work to do about their own souls and a still greater about yours." They have all your trials and temptations and some that belong only to the minister. Help them in their work of "*winning souls to Christ*." Pray for them that the word of the Lord may run and be glorified.— But Christ also feeds His flock by His ordinances. He spreads out before them rich feasts, saying— "*Eat, O my friends ! yea, drink, O Beloved*." And these ordinances when rightly used as means to an end, are channels of Divine Grace to the soul, whereby the spiritual nature of the man is strengthened, and refreshed faith is confirmed and hope increased. But it is the Spirit that quickeneth the flesh profiteth nothing.

Oh ! that minister and people continually thought upon these things ! then would the heavens be no longer like brass, neither the vineyards of the Lord dry and parched as a barren soil. The ministry of the word would become sharp as a two-edged sword. The ordinances of the Lord's house, precious channels of the waters of life-giving nourishment to the feeble, to the weary and afflicted, strength and consolation.

Oh ! that the people would seek the Lord's pre-

sence in His house! for then would He "*feed them with the finest of the wheat, and with honey from the stony rock, would he satisfy them.*"

(II.) Notice the endearing title which the Church gives to the Good Shepherd—" *Oh Thou whom my soul loveth.*" This is the language of God's saints. They love Jesus the well beloved of the Father. — "*Oh! Thou whom my soul loveth,*" as if she had said Oh! Thou great and good Shepherd, tell me in what pastures thou feedest thy sheep. Though I am black as the tents of Kedar, though I am the meanest among ten thousand, yet I love Thee. Through fear of others, (who have forced me to keep other vineyards,) I have sadly neglected my own, yet have compassion on me, and tell me, I beseech thee—" *Oh! Thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest my flock.*"

Reader, is this the language of your heart? Can you say that you love the Lord Christ and that you long for His presence and wait for His salvation. Perhaps, like the Church in our text, you have wandered from the Shepherd's fold—you have lost your way and been enticed into the world and now the Lord Jesus seems to hide His from you, and you are troubled. You see not the tokens and cannot read your title clear. But stay, wanderer! Listen to the words of the text. Make them your own. Lift up your voice to Jesus, and if you are

one of His flock, He will listen and restore again the joy of your soul's salvation.

Reader, if thou art a Child of Grace, a sheep of the flock, I need not say how blessed and how precious is that Saviour who vouchsafes to keep and defend you. To them that believe Christ is precious.

Consider, Christian brother, how great and distinguished is thy privilege, if, like the sweet singer of Israel, thou canst say—" *The Lord is my Shepherd, therefore I shall lack nothing.*"<sup>1</sup> Be sure if Christ Jesus be thy portion, thou shalt not finally want any good thing. It matters not what those things be, temporal or spiritual.

*He who feedeth<sup>2</sup> the young ravens that cry unto Him and clothes with its matchless beauty the lily of the valley, He will give every good and needful gift and supply all our wants.*

*He that spared<sup>3</sup> not to shed His own most precious life blood, but gave that life as a ransom for us all, how shall He not, with such a gift, freely supply our every spiritual want."*

But the language of the text breathes deep and earnest love for Christ Jesus. Know you aught of his love? Can you say, like Peter, "*Lord thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love Thee.*"

Reader, if thou hast not this love in thine heart for the Lord Jesus Christ, thou art accursed, for saith

1. Ps. xxiii. 1.    2. Ps. cxlvii. 9.    3. Rom. viii. 32.

the Apostle, "*If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha.*"<sup>1</sup> Does this tremendous curse rest upon thy soul? Canst thou give sleep to thine eyes, or slumber to thine eyelids, while the anathema of God's word hangs over thy soul? How dreadful the doom of that sinner, upon whom the Lord Jesus himself shall pronounce an eternal anathema!

"*Tell me where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon.*"

The allusion here is to Shepherds, who during the scorching heat of the day lead their flocks under some shady rock or grove of trees for shelter. Recent travellers in the Holy Land have particularly noticed the care of the Shepherds for their flocks during the heat of the noon-day's sun. "In one place we saw many of the flocks gathered together under a *shady tree*, waiting till the excessive *heat of noon* should be abated. At other times they were lying down beside a fountain or well of water."<sup>2</sup> We were reminded of the words of the Song of Songs—"Tell me where, &c."

This is a prayer of the Church to the *Good Shepherd* during a time of *great trial* and *affliction*. The sun of *affliction* and *persecution* and *temptation* had looked upon her in its mid-day strength, and she was "*black*" by reason of her sorrows,

1. I. Cor. xvi. 22.    2. Narrative of Mission to Palestine.

and covered with shame, because she had neglected her own vineyard.

The Believer in Jesus is sometimes placed in the midst of *great* and *manifold temptations*, which cause him to go in heaviness all the day long.

Satan, the great *Tempter* "*goeth about upon the earth, seeking whom he may devour.*" He desires to have them that he may sift them like wheat; and so *tempted* and *tried* are they, that they begin to think that surely they are NOT *of the number of CHRIST'S FLOCK*. They can say indeed with David—"Blessed is the man whom thou choosest,"<sup>1</sup> but they are not satisfied that this *blessedness is theirs*. This cometh of the Devil, and is a sore temptation to many of God's dear children. To make them *doubt* the truth of God's love in general and of their *own* interest therein, in *particular*, is the Devil's most subtle temptation.

"How do you know," says he "that you are of the number of God's elect? How can you, with all your infirmities and backslidings—suppose that you are one of Christ's flock? It is presumption and spiritual pride!"

Happy for you, if, under this kind of temptation, you hasten to the *Shepherd* and *Bishop* of your soul and cry to Him like the Church in my text—"tell me where thou makest Thy flock to rest at noon!"

1. Ps. lxxv. 4.

If, heretofore, you have *ever enjoyed the peace* which they have, whose souls are *justified by faith*:—if you have at any time rejoiced in Christ Jesus, having *no confidence in the flesh*:—if you are now truly desirous to *choose* God in Christ to be your *portion*: if you can say with Paul “*I delight in the law of God*”<sup>1</sup> *in my inner man*: if it is your *desire* to be conformed to Christ’s *image*: if these be the feelings of your soul—rest assured ‘from God’s word—your name is *written* in the *Book of Life*.

You could never have chosen God, had not He *first* chosen you. You could never have loved Jesus, had not He *first* loved you. You could not have delighted in His Law—for that had never been written upon thine heart—had not the Lord of His own *free sovereign grace* FIRST written your name in the Lamb’s book of Life!

Cast aside, therefore, this temptation of the Evil one. Feed upon the sure and precious *promises* of your Lord.

“If thou hast lost thine *evidence*, go again to the Throne of Grace for a *fresh copy*. The original is in the *pardon-office* of Heaven, whereof Christ is the master. Listen not to the *doubts* which Satan tempteth with. He was a *liar* and a *murderer* from the beginning. Canst thou expect *truth* then from a liar—or *comfort* from a murderous enemy?”

1. Rom. vii. 22.

Turn again, therefore, unto your rest, oh! ye tempted ones of Christ's flock! Behold, He *feedeth* His flocks with *His own fulness*—with His own promises which are *unconditional and never failing*. Another *kind of temptation* with which Satan tempteth Believers, is to have *hard thoughts of God's dealings towards them*.—Thus he makes "*black*," their thoughts towards God.

Are you one of God's dear people and yet suffering this *spiritual trouble*.—Are you at a *loss* how to *reconcile* the dealings of God the Father towards you? Are you tempted to look upon them as *hard and severe*? Did Joseph love his Brethren, though he spake *roughly* to them? "And doth God love His children the *less*, because sometimes He must needs chasten them. Doth not St. Paul himself, teach us that *the afflictions of God's dear children stand for BLESSINGS*?"

Who then among you, would pray to be *without* such *TOKENS* of a Father's love?

The *prosperity* of the *wicked* is their *CURSE*—Their lack of chastisement, is a *proof* and evidence that they are *bastards* and not *children*.

"*God deals with the wicked as Jael dealt with Sisera*."—He suffers them to have the milk of this world's *delights* and *pleasures*—Thus they bind themselves all the faster in the *sleep* of false *security*, till the nail strikes through their temple; and



they find themselves in the hands of the *enemy*.

Under such temptations as these, seek for the pastures where the good Shepherd maketh "*His flock to rest at noon*."

Though He suffers affliction to scorch your soul with its burning rays—the good Shepherd who feedeth His flock can also lead them by still waters of comfort. He hath *sweet resting places* where His afflicted people may and do find *peace*.

He watches His sheep and *portions* out their *afflictions*. In the hour of temptation:—in the day of calamity:—in the solemn hour of *rebuke* and chastening from the Lord—

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,  
But trust Him for His Grace:  
Behind a *frowning* Providence  
He hides a smiling face.

Ask Him to lead you in His *green pastures*,  
Feed upon the Bread of Life—even the precious words of Holy Writ. Meditate upon His *love*: upon the sure and faithful promises which he has given you as food for your souls.

Cast your souls upon them as *sure* and *stedfast*, and though ye pass the waters they shall not overflow you, when you walk in the fires of affliction not a hair of your heads shall be singed.<sup>1</sup>

"*Fear not little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*"<sup>2</sup>

1. Is. xliii. 2.

2. Luke xii. 32.

And surely as it is His pleasure to give you the kingdom itself, so certainly will He support you on your pilgrimage to it.

Your *troubles* may be many, but He who is your refuge and strength, hath said—“*Fear not, for I am with thee, I will be with thee in trouble, yea, I will deliver thee and bring thee to honour.*”

By “*noon*,” some have understood the greatest trial of all *trials* to flesh and blood—*death*. This certainly is included in this prayer for a *resting-place* in time of *distress*.

The *raging heat* at noon, faintly describes that last great *temptation* and *trial*.

To Christless souls, *death* is a King of Terrors—Am I addressing a Christless soul? Am I a faithful witness to one soul, yet living, ignorant of God and Christ?

Oh! that God the Holy Ghost may touch thine heart! Think thou art a poor dying creature!—Consider *how* soon—oh! how soon thy soul may be required of thee, and then *what hast thou to rest upon*? Thou art ignorant of Jesus Christ—*Thou hast no hope beyond the grave!*

Oh! think of your *dying* hour—when flesh and blood fail:—when your feet shall *stumble* upon the *dark* mountains:—when your *weeping friends* press for the last time your cold hand, and bid you a *long* and *everlasting* farewell:—when *eternity* and

the *presence* of God are brought close to you :—when the last struggle of your *departing spirit* is well nigh over ..... oh ! THINK ! CALMLY THINK and consider, on *what*, on *whom* will you rest *your* soul ?

To *whom* will you cry for help ? Where will you look for *comfort* ? To *Christ* ? Why you are *despising* His *mercies* and trampling beneath your feet His *precious blood* ! And know this, if you still despise His *voice* :—and still refuse to hearken to His *entreaty*—though you hereafter will *call*, He will not *hearken* : though you cry for *mercy*, He will not shew mercy. In despair, you will then learn the depth of your *misery*—aggravated by the FACT—that ONCE *you were within the REACH of MERCY and PARDON, and despised both !*

We persuade you by the terrors of the law—“ *be ye reconciled to God !* ” Does that fail ? Again and again we entreat you, by the *love* of Jesus—have pity upon your *own* souls. Despise not His *love*. Neglect not His proffered mercies.

Sinner as thou art, Jesus loves thy soul !

Believe ! *now*, while it is called to-day !—Now is the day of Salvation.—*To-morrow* ! It may find thee in eternity.—*To-morrow* !—Jesus may come in *His Glory* !

Sinner, on thy knees, this very hour, cry to Jesus for mercy ! In the *grave*, there is no more mercy to

be asked for ! In eternity, there is no Gospel to be preached to dying sinners !

“ *Why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions ?* The more literal translation in the margin, without altering the sense, adds to the force of the passage.

Why should I go “*veiled*,” &c.—An allusion is evidently made here, to a custom very common in the East, of covering the head in seasons of grief and humiliation.

Thus, David, when fleeing before his unnatural and rebellious son, “*went up by the ascent of mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot : and all the people that was with him covered every man his head, and they went up weeping as they went up.*”<sup>1</sup>

So Jeremiah, describing the misery of the people, for lack of water—“*They came to the pits, and found no water ; they returned with their vessels empty : they were ashamed and confounded, and covered their heads. Because the ground is chapt, for there was no rain in the earth, the plowmen were ashamed, they covered their heads.*”<sup>2</sup>

And how *truly* does the soul of every troubled Believer go mourning all the day long—while seeking a return to Christ’s flock and the comforts of His presence ! Nothing but restoration to Christ’s

1. II. Sam. xv. 30.

2. Jer. xiv. 3.

fold, can restore the joy of their soul. Even the Angels failed to comfort the weeping Mary. They could not dry her tears.

The voice of Jesus, like "*music on the breezes*," alone can say—" *Peace be still !*"

He has promised—" *Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.*"<sup>1</sup>

8. *If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents.*

This is the answer of the good Shepherd, in reply to the appeal made in the previous verse.

In this answer of Jesus, we may notice, (I.) *how graciously He commends*—and (II.) *how readily He answers* the petition which the Church had made to Him (I.) "*Oh ! thou fairest amongst women.*"

The Church is here spoken of under the figure and similitude of a "*woman*:"—and is described as being among women "*the fairest*."—This is the more striking, if we refer to the Church's own confession, in the 5th and 6th verses, where she speaks of herself *personally* as lacking both comeliness and beauty.

1. Ps. l. 15

The Saints of God, that are in the earth, though *uncomely*, by reason of manifold *infirmities* (“*for the infection of their fallen nature doth remain even in them that are regenerate,*”) yet, being washed in the Lamb’s blood, and clothed with His righteousness, (which is like fine linen, *clean and white*)—and adorned with the *graces* of the Holy Ghost, are very fair and beautiful in the Saviour’s eyes.

Indeed, they are *fairest* in Jesus’ sight, when blackest in their own—For observe, it is after the Church, in 5th verse, confesses “*I am black,*” that Jesus says to her—“*thou fairest among women.*”

So it is written in the Gospel, concerning a *broken hearted* Publican, who smote upon his *breast*, crying “*God be merciful to me a sinner,*”—that Jesus testified “*I tell you this man went down to his house justified rather than the other—for whosoever humbleth himself shall be exalted, and whosoever exalteth himself shall be cast down.*”<sup>1</sup>

Then it is He sees a peculiar *beauty* and *excellence* in His people, when He *sees their souls humbled to the dust*: when he hears them bemoan themselves as the *least of Saints*.

“*Be ye therefore clothed with humility,*” not the mere “*shew of humility,*” but “*heartfelt humility,*”.....not merely “*putting on*” humility as a *loose garment*—but as the word properly sig-

1. Luke xviii. 14.

nifies—be clothed with it as with an *outer and ornamental garment*, which the ancients used to wear *tied closely* to their bodies with knots.

Professing Church of Christ! learn of the Apostle, (yea, of your own Lord and Master,) to be clothed with *humility*. Cherish it in your *hearts*. Pray much for the *Spirit* of humility. It is the Spirit of Christ himself. "*He resisteth the proud, but giveth grace* (pours it out *plentifully*) *upon the humble.*"

II. How readily does Christ respond to the entreaty of His Church! "*Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the Shepherd's tents.*" This direction is two-fold, (i.) "*Go forth by the footsteps of the flock.*"—(ii.) "*Feed thy kids beside the Shepherd's tents.*"

I apprehend that it is the flock of Jesus which is here referred to. That flock which the Father has given Him, which, it is also said, He, as Mediator, purchased with His own blood, and which he feeds continually, like a Shepherd.

It is called "THE" flock, by way of emphasis, as distinguished from the flocks of those other Shepherds mentioned in the 7th verse. There is but ONE "*Good Shepherd*,"—so there is but *one* flock."

JESUS HAS BUT ONE FLOCK. As compared with the many who will not recognize Him and do

not heed His voice—it is a *small* flock. At the *last* it will be found to be composed of “*a great multitude, such as no man can number!*”<sup>1</sup>

This flock is a chosen one, *elect* and *precious*.—Some of them have already entered into their rest, and others are yet in the wilderness, *guided* and *watched* over by the good Shepherd.

Soon they too will enter into heavenly pastures. They will no longer be DIVIDED as Jacob’s flocks were, when he put a space betwixt drove and drove. There will be but *one fold*’ in Heaven, as there is but one Shepherd on Earth.

“In the dispensation of the fulness of times, God will gather together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in Heaven and which are in Earth.”<sup>2</sup>

From various sections of the Church Catholic, shall they come. All shall be ONE in Christ Jesus.

Every Shibboleth of Party shall be forgotten. This alone, will be the rallying point—the *key-note* of their eternal song—“*Unto Him that loved us and washed us in His blood, be glory, and honour, dominion and power, for ever and ever!*”<sup>3</sup>

Blessed souls, whose names shall not be blotted out of the book of Life! Blessed and happy Believer, who can say, with all David’s confidence

1. Rev. vii. 9.

2. Jno. x. 16.

3. Eph. i. 10.

4. Rev. i. 5.



—“ *The Lord is MY Shepherd, therefore I shall not want.*”<sup>1</sup>

A little while and your wanderings will be over. Soon you will enter into the fold from which you will never be tempted to stray.

As the *flock* is *one*, so also is the *way* along which that flock goes. There is but *one* way in which the flock of Christ hath ever walked..

In the same *good old paths* by which *patriarchs* and *prophets* and *apostles* and *martyrs* trod in the ways of the Lord, we must follow. Many *disputes* have been *raised* about it by men who are ignorant of the “*way*,”—but wherever such disputes originate, we know only of one way in which to walk—“*I am the way*,” saith the Lord—“*No man cometh to the Father but by me.*”<sup>2</sup>

Thus hath Jesus, by His own express *words*, as well as by the examples of *Saints of old*, clearly marked out the paths in which he would have His people walk.

These are the footsteps of the flock in which he bids the inquiring soul go forth.

Here, *mark a great truth*, viz.—“*That the faith and obedience of God’s Saints, (as to the substance of them generally speaking,) have been the same in all ages.*”

There never has been but “*one faith: one*

1. Ps. xxiii. 1.

2. Jno. xiv. 6.

*Lord : one baptism.*” “*Christ Jesus, and Him crucified,*” has been the object of faith, to which Patriarchs and Prophets looked through sacrifices and *types*.....By faith in Him—were *Abel* and *Enoch* and *Noah* and *Abraham* and *Moses*, and the Prophets JUSTIFIED before God, and enabled to *do* and *suffer* and *obey*, “*looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of their faith.*”

“Though they were not named Christian men : yet it was a *Christian Faith* that they had, for they looked for all benefits of God the Father, through the merits of His *Son* Jesus Christ, as we now do. The difference, between them and us is : they looked when Christ should come and we believe in the time when He *is come* : therefore, we perceive, Brethren, the time is altered and changed, but not the faith.”

Enquiring souls, that would see Jesus, must go forth by the footsteps of the flock. They must *follow their faith*—and *walk* in their *steps*.

St. Paul,<sup>1</sup> speaks of Abraham as being the Father of all those that walk in the *steps* of that *faith* which he had yet, being UNCIRCUMCISED : even of those who tread in the steps of his faith and follow him in *his obedience* and give similar *marks* and *evidence* of the *reality* of their faith.

Likewise, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, he in-

1. Rom. iv. 12.

stances many bright examples "*of faith which worketh by love.*"<sup>1</sup>

Select for instance, Abraham's *faith* and his obedience. By faith he left his *home* and *kindred* separating himself from the place of his birth—and at the *bidding* of God, went forth, (he knew not whither,) exchanging a peaceful, happy home for a *dangerous* and uncertain pilgrimage. By FAITH, the Patriarch *sojourned* in a strange land. By FAITH, he believed the promise of God, *that as the stars for multitude* so should his seed be, when as yet he had no child. By FAITH, he lifted up his hand to slay his only son Isaac, on whom all his hopes were fixed and in whose *person* all the promises *centered*: believing (though no like case had ever happened before,) that God was able to raise him up, even from the DEAD.

Christ bids his Church tread in the steps of this Holy Patriarch, for he stands *first* and *foremost* in the flock of the faithful!

Reader, are you following in the steps of Abraham's faith? You see what *an* EXACT PRINT of them the Holy Ghost hath left on the page of Scripture. That same God, who commanded Abraham that he should leave his home and country, and go forth, not knowing whither he should go,

bids you come out from the *world* and be separate from it. He says to you "*set your affections on things above, and not on things below.*"<sup>1</sup>—"Sacrifice your dearest idol for me!"

Have you, like Abraham, believed God? Have you come out from Canaan?—Are you treading in the steps of those Sainted Patriarchs, who, through faith, lived like Pilgrims, knowing that this earth is not their HOME, but that they have a better country provided—that is—a HEAVENLY?

Abraham's *faith* is proposed to us as an example. Let us tread in his steps. He against *hope*, believed in hope. He trusted the promise of *Jehovah*, in the face of apparent *impossibilities*. Let us do the same! He staggered not at the word of God, but *believed God's BARE and naked promises*, in the midst of the most *appalling* difficulties and improbabilities. He believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

May every reader thus *earnestly believe!* May the faith of Abraham rebuke all your fears, if you have any. God in Christ is better than all your fears! May every soul who reads this, rest assured of it, that whatsoever God hath said, HE will *surely bring to pass!*

We might, at still greater length, trace the *foot-steps* of the flock! But time would fail, to tell of

1. Coloss. iii. 2.

Abel, who, though scoffed at and hated by his brother, because of his faith, served God and glorified Him in martyrdom:—of ENOCH, who in the midst of a faithless generation, “*walked with God*:” —of Noah, who, for 120 years, lived in daily expectation of the Lord’s coming to judge the earth:—of *Abraham, Isaac and Jacob*, who lived in tents—thereby proving that they sought a *better country*, even a heavenly:—of MOSES, who renounced the *pomps and vanities* of this wicked world, left the *splendid prospects* of Pharaoh’s Court—and choose rather to suffer reproach with God’s people, than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season: and all those other *WORTHIES* who, through faith, in an unseen Christ, endured *trials of cruel mockings, scourgings, bonds, and imprisonments*, “being stoned—sawn asunder—tempted—slain with the sword—destitute—afflicted—tormented:—of whom the world *was not worthy*.”

These, all have obtained a good report by FAITH. We are *bidden* in the Scriptures, to go forth *by their footsteps* and so to follow them as they followed the good Shepherd.

Is the Church of Christ following the footsteps of *the flock*?

We see its victories! We see, that by *faith*, they overcame

Their faith was *triumphant*. Professing Church

of Christ, are you exhibiting the faith of these Holy Pilgrims?

Are you, bearing the reproach of the world?—Are you content to suffer affliction with Christ's people, rather than enjoy the pleasures of the world? Can you patiently bear the loss of all earthly prosperity with the prospect of enjoying the treasures of Christ?

Remember, by faith they overcame! And faith has lost none of its power. It is still omnipotent through Christ. What so mighty as the *world*? Yet—“*This is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith.*”<sup>1</sup>

Do you say “*my faith is weak!*”—Ask for more.—“*Lord increase my faith.*”—Faith is the gift of God. It is *mighty* and STRONG in the omnipotence of His *grace*. And GRACE is FREE.

“*ASK and thou shalt have!—seek and thou shalt find.*”—“*According to thy FAITH so shall it be done unto thee!*”<sup>2</sup>

“*Feed thy kids beside the Shepherd's tents.*” Jewish commentators understand by the *Tents*—*Synagogues* and *Schools* of instruction: and by the *KIDS*, “*young converts:*” persons of “*little faith.*”

The direction then here is to wait upon the Lord in His *house* and in His ordinances. He has therein promised His help and blessing. He

1. I. Jno. v. 4.

2. Matt. ix. 29.

has declared that "*where two or three are gathered He is in the midst.*"

Wait, therefore, upon the Lord in the *ministry of the Word and the celebration of His sacraments.*

That Word is expressly *declared* to be the means of spiritual life.—"*Thy word hath quickened me.*"<sup>1</sup> It is the *means of growth* also, as the Apostle saith—"*As new born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.*"<sup>2</sup>—But let it be mixed with faith—"Wait also on the Lord in prayer."<sup>3</sup>

Wait also upon the Lord for *renewal* of strength and for *fulness of joy* at *His Table.*

That Table is *spread* for the *hungry* and for the *thirsty.* It is not for the *world*, for they are full.

It is for the *Lord's flock*—who do truly repent and have a *lively faith* in Jesus, and who *love the brethren.* It is for them that love the good Shepherd and who desire to feed *spiritually* on Him who is the true manna—the bread that cometh down from Heaven. Feed therefore upon His Holy Sacrament. Be found *obedient* to His last dying command—"Do this," &c.<sup>4</sup>

Thus keep *near the Shepherd's Tents* and ye will find *rich and heavenly food* to *strengthen and refresh* your souls.

1. Ps. cxix. 50.

2. I. Thea. ii. 13.

3. Mat. xxi. 22.

4. Luke xxii. 19.

*"Wait upon the Lord and ye shall renew your strength—Ye shall mount up with wings like Eagles and ye shall run and not be weary, and walk and not faint."*<sup>1</sup>

9. *I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots.*

The gracious title with which the Church is here addressed and the remarkable comparison which is made respecting her deserves attention.

*"O my love,"*—The expression may be rendered *"O my friend."* There is a mutual friendship between *Christ and His Church*. Believers recognize in Jesus a Friend *"who sticketh closer than a brother,"*—and Jesus is pleased to acknowledge them as His friends—*"Henceforth I call you not Servants but Friends."* In that character He welcomes his Brethren to *His Royal Banquet*—*"Eat, oh! friends, drink, yea drink abundantly O beloved."*—The Septuagint renders it *"My neighbour,"* and truly Christ and his people are neighbours. They dwell nigh to each other. He dwells in their hearts and they dwell near him by faith.

But, our own version—*"O my love!"* is peculiarly expressive of His love, who gave himself—

1. Isaiah xl. 31.



*“that he might present to himself a glorious Church not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing.”*

Consider, for a moment, the ample proofs our blessed Redeemer gave of His love which “*passeth knowledge.*”

Consider its *source* and *origin*. As it is written, God loved the Israelites, “*because He loved them*”<sup>1</sup> of His own sovereign free will: so Jesus loves his Church.

It was not because He saw *any thing lovely* in you! He loved you when you were children of *wrath*, even as others. He died for you when you when you were yet in sin—“*serving divers lusts and pleasures.*”

He loved you, not because you loved Him.—You love Him because He first loved you. “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved *us*, and gave His own Son to die for us.”<sup>2</sup> Oh! surely this is marvellous love!

There is *not one* redeemed sinner who has felt the power of Jesus’ love and can now sing “*of mercy and judgement,*” but must say, with a Saint of old, “*Not unto us O Lord, not unto us, to thy name be the glory!*”

Christ’s love for His Church, is also an “*everlasting love.*” *Before the mountains were formed, He rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth and*

1. Deut. x. 7—8.

2. I. Jno. 4—20.

*his delights were with the sons of men.* And as He loved his Church *from* all eternity, so He loves them to all eternity.<sup>1</sup>

The love of Jesus is the same, *yesterday, to day, and for ever.* It is stronger than death.

Many waters of *sin* and *ingratitude* in His people cannot quench it.....neither could floods of *reproach* and *cruel mockings* and *sufferings* which were poured out upon Him from the manger to the cross—weaken it!

His love is like Himself—*invariable : unalterable : unchangeable.*

Notice, too, the *quality* of Jesus' love—In *degree* it is the first *display of love the world has seen, not to be compared with any other instance* on record.

No higher expression of love could be given. What will not a man give for his life? It is what he most values—and the loss of which he most dreads. Now for one man to be willing to lay down his life for another, as in the case of Damon and Pythias—(the two renowned friends of ancient days) was so marvellous a thing, that it has been recorded as the wonder of the age in which they lived.

But, Christ's love—to what can you compare it? He laid down His *life* not for *friends*—but *enemies*—His was *great* love for great sinners,

He was in the form of God and thought it no

1. Prov. viii. 31.

robbery to be equal with God!<sup>1</sup> yet he emptied himself of his glory. He humbled himself and the shame of the Cross he despised not! He was rejected of men—a man of *sorrow* and acquainted with grief!<sup>2</sup>

Such love is without parallel.....“ *For scarcely for a righteous man will one die,*<sup>3</sup> (i. e. scarcely for one of those who has kept the letter of the law—that which was required but no more,) yet, peradventure, for a *good man* (one who was *bountiful and kind* to the poor, and *did more than the law required in repairing the temple and maintaining the SACRIFICES*),—for a *good man*, one might be found willing even to die. But who would die for the *ungodly* and the *wicked*—the *baser sort*—the CRUEL—and the WICKED?

Yet *God*—(EVEN OUR GOD,)—*God commendeth His love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners*—Christ died for the *ungodly*.”

And, bear in mind, that it is with such love as this—that He regards his Church.

How blessed, if you, my reader, are truly a member incorporate of that Church! How lofty your privileges! How glorious your prospects!

Having loved His own that are in the world, He loves them to the *end*!<sup>4</sup> There is no variableness

1. Phil. ii. 6.

2. Is. liii. 3.

3. Rom. v. 7.

4. Jno. xiii. 1.

nor shadow of turning with Him? He has graven the names of His people on the very palms of His hand.—They are dear to Him, as the apple of His eye.—None shall pluck them from out of His hand.

Professing Church of Christ, abuse not this doctrine!—Deny it not!

Let no man suspect and deny God's truth, because of the inconsistencies of those who profess it.

Let professors of Christ's religion be what they may, God unfolds to us, in Holy Writ, this *blessed truth*.—"I, the Lord, change not."—If *He* change not—then *His love changes not*.

But, beware, that you do not abuse this *glorious truth*! Remember—the only sure evidence you can have of being *one* of those whom *Jesus loves*, is by *loving Him*—taking up your Cross and following Him—being conformed to His image.

*Perseverance* in Christ's ways, is, the surest evidence of being one whom He loves!

"I have compared thee, (O my love,) to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariot."

Among the *ancients*, a horse was held in very *high estimation*: so much so, that they were consecrated to the sun. The sun was worshipped in the east, and the *horse*, being the swiftest and most majestic of all tame animals—was consecrated to this object of their worship.

Both among the Persians and Arminians, horses were just as highly esteemed, as the white cow is among the Brahmins.

Even among the civilized Romans, two of the Emperors erected effigies of their horses in the Temple, the one of marble—the *other of gold*.

The great conqueror, Alexander, built a city, Bucephalus, after the name of his favourite horse.

These instances—(sinful and vain enough) suffice to show us the high value which the ancients put upon the horse.—They serve also to explain the *significancy* of the image which Solomon here employs.

The Church is compared to a company of horses in Pharoah's chariot. To ignorant persons, this comparison has furnished subject for unseemly jest. The Church is compared to a company of horses, to signify excellence and strength—to *Egyptian* horses, because they were esteemed the *very best*:—and to those in *Pharoah's chariot*, as being the very best of all.

Let us *briefly* notice one or two points in which this comparison holds good.

*Horses are distinguished for strength*, especially a company of them, such as these. How magnificent is *God's own* description of the strength and majesty of a horse.<sup>1</sup>

1. Job xxxix 18—1 .

My Brethren, if God himself has been pleased to illustrate His *own perfections* by the *majesty* and *beauty* of the horse, why should it be thought an unseemly comparison which Solomon by the Holy Ghost here makes—" *I have compared,*" &c. ?

But, look at the comparison. Is the horse strong—and is his neck clothed with *thunder* ? So are believers in Jesus. Their *strength* and their *glory* lies in their union with the great head of the Church. They can do nothing of themselves—but all things through Christ, which strengtheneth them.

Does the horse despise fear, and rejoicing in strength, go forth to the battle, heeding not the rattling of the quiver, or the glittering spear and shield.—So is the Church of Jesus Christ, strong in the Lord and the might of his power. She stands forth against an opposing world—against principalities and powers—against rulers of wickedness in high places—and though a host encamp against her, she comes forth "*fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.*"

Look at that noble Christian warrior, whose portrait the Holy Ghost has sketched by the pen of St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Ephesians !

Clad in the whole armour of God—his loins girt about with truth and sincerity of heart—his heart (the seat and centre of life,) defended by the breast-

plate of Jesus' righteousness—his feet shod with gospel sandals, protecting them from snares and pit-falls beneath—having the shield of faith in his hand—and the helmet of salvation on his head and grasping in his hand the two-edged sword of the spirit:—*SUCH a Christian warrior*, going forth in the *strength and name* of the Lord, may well be compared for *majestic bearing* and noble courage, "*to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots!*"

This is not *mere boasting!* Look at the Church of Christ, from the days of Abel, until now! How *courageous*, how *majestic*, how *bold*, have the faithful proved themselves in every age! Look at Abel bearing the *scoffs* and bitter hatred of his brother!—Look at Noah, mocked and derided by the anti-deluvians! Look at Joseph resisting evil and triumphing over persecution! Look at Moses, forty years an exile—forty years a wanderer—rebuked—reviled—persecuted and punished, yet *faithful* and *courageous* and strong in his God! Look at Daniel and the three Jewish youths, the one braving the *savage fury of a den of lions*: the others courageously protesting before a powerful monarch against his *idolatry*, and willingly adventuring themselves into the furnace, whose flames were heated seven times the more fierce. Look at the Apostles and noble army of Martyrs, who suffered cruel deaths—being *tortured*—were *stoned*

—were *burned*—were *slain* with the sword :—their houses devastated : their children murdered—their wives made widows. These *were valiant for the truth* as it is in Jesus ! Look through that shining roll of Christian worthies, whose record St. Paul<sup>1</sup> has left, and when you read the words of this Song—(whether you look at them as a kind of *prophetic* description of Christ's Church, or as a characteristic of it in all ages,) you need not wonder that for *undaunted courage* and *noble bearing* the Church of Christ is compared to a "*company of horses in Pharoah's Chariot !*"

But, observe, the Church is compared not only to "*a company of horses,*" but to a company of horses in Pharoah's chariots. And *why* to those in *Pharoah's* chariot ?

The horses in Pharoah's chariots were doubtless the *choicest* of all the horses. They were *picked* and *selected* out *peculiarly* for his service.—They were, as one of the *Jewish commentators* observes, *a very choice and curious collection*.....And is not the Church of Christ a *chosen generation*.....a *royal* priesthood, a *holy* nation, a *peculiar* people ?<sup>2</sup> Is not the Church of Christ DISTINGUISHED and SEPARATED and *chosen unto God* ?

Are not the members of Christ's Church collected out of this *wicked* and *naughty* world by His sove-

1. Heb. xi. 2—40.

2. I. Pet. ii. 9.



*reign* grace; ..... a *remnant* according to the *election of grace*<sup>1</sup>.....REDEEMED from among men of EVERY KINDRED, TONGUE, PEOPLE, and NATION? Have they not been *chosen* by the power of *divine grace*—"one of a city and two of a family" "*made willing in the day of His power*"<sup>2</sup>—and thus become *partakers* of grace here as they shall be of *glory* henceforth?

The horses in *Pharaoh's Chariot* were doubtless purchased at a *great price*.

In the days of Solomon, (who was the son-in-law of the King of Egypt, and by reason of family connexion—was permitted to trade with Egypt,) a horse was purchased for 150 shekels of silver.

And has not the *soul* of every Believer in Jesus been *purchased* at a very *great price*?—That price is not *silver and gold*.—"Ye are *not redeemed* with such *corruptible things*"<sup>3</sup> but with the *priceless* blood of the Son of God have ye been bought.

Bought *too*, for the service of the King of Kings, that ye may grace His triumphs in that day "*when all Kings shall bow down before Him and all Princes do Him honour*."

Look, therefore, at the *comparison* as you will, *either* as descriptive of *strength*—or *courage*—or *swiftness*—or *boldness*—or *preciousness*—you will

1. Rom. xi. 5.—I. Thes. i. 4.

2. Ps. cx. 3.

3. I. Peter. i. 18.

not fail to see great beauty and suitableness in the words.

Seeing then how great is the *love* of our *Saviour Jesus*, (if you have tasted of his goodness,) what is there too much for you to *do* or *suffer*, whereby you may testify your own grateful *love* ?

10. *Thy cheeks are comely with rows of Jewels, thy neck with chains of gold.*

11. *We will make thee borders of gold with studs of silver.*

These words express (I.) the true beauty and glory of Christ's Church, and (II.) the proper source whence its comeliness proceeds.

(I.) Christ continues His commendation of His Church—" *Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels.*" To apply and accommodate every part and ornament mentioned here, would be only a *vain conceit* and profitless curiosity.

But, observe, that while the "*cheeks and neck*" as being the chief seat of beauty in the human body—are figuratively employed *to set forth the Church's beauty*: it is expressly intimated that her comeliness is not natural *OF* or *BY herself*, but altogether by the grace and favour *of Him*, who adorns her with spiritual graces and gifts, such as are set forth here under the figures "*rows of jewels—chains of gold, and borders of gold,*" &c.

And thus at the very outset, we are taught that "BY GRACE, *are we saved*," and "*that not of ourselves it is the gift of God*:" that in Christ alone are we pleasing and acceptable to God the Father.

What, then, are "*those rows of jewels*," and "*chains of gold*," (or to drop the metaphor,) those *gifts and graces* of Christ by His Spirit, wherewith His Church *as a body*, and every individual member of the same in his *vocation and calling*, is (if indeed a living member of His Church,) more or less adorned!

Here, let me observe—every real member of Christ's Church hath received the Holy Ghost, "*for if any man have not the SPIRIT of Christ, he is none of His*."<sup>1</sup>—And that "*same Spirit abideth in and worketh in them that believe, filling them with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ unto the praise and glory of God*."<sup>2</sup>..... Now the "*fruits of the Spirit*,"—are those "*rows of jewels and chains of gold*," which give grace and comeliness to the Believer.

The question then, that concerns each, is—Am I adorned with these "*rows of jewels*" and "*chains of gold*,"—these fruits of the Holy Spirit? They are visible to all, for they are hung *about the head and neck* of the Church. There's no mistaking them.....there they are distinctly to be seen.....

1. Rom. viii. 9.

2. Phil. ii.

as "*ornaments of grace about the head and chains about the neck!*"

Have we these marking us out with the "*seal of the living God:*" as very members indeed of the Church of Jesus Christ?

Do you ask what they are? (see Gal. v. 22—23) How beautiful and comely SUCH "*rows of jewels and chains of gold!*"

"They far outshine the wealth of Ormus or of Ind;  
Or where the gorgeous East, with richest hand,  
Showers on her kings barbaric pearl and gold."

This is the golden chain of grace, linked with jewelled clasps, with which the King of Saints adorns His Church and people! They are bestowed by Him. They are the "*fruits*" produced by His Spirit. Examine them one by one, link by link. How beautiful and orderly and comely!

(I.) "*Love*"—to Him who *first* loved *us* and whose "*love*" constraineth us to love Him and one another for Him.

(II.) "*Joy*"—in knowing and tasting this love: in the assurance of pardon *through* this love: in the SERVICE and WORKS of love: in bearing trials because inflicted by the hand of love!

(III.) "*Peace*"—with God, being justified by faith: peace—with our brethren, seeking always "*those things which make for peace;*" peace with ourselves, without anxiety for the *present* or *future*,

having learned with St. Paul and by the *same Spirit*, "*in whatsoever state we are, therewith to be content.*"

(IV.) "LONG-SUFFERING"—patient in trial, or under rebuke, whether of God or man:—not easily provoked:—readily forgiving.

(V.) "*Gentleness*"—of a *kind, loving, gentle spirit and manner*: not *harsh*, or *crabbed*, or *crooked* in temper—but easy to be entreated.

(VI.) "*Goodness*"—full of benevolence and charity.

(VII.) "*Faith*" or rather "*faithfulness*,"—sincerity—uprightness—this runs through all the other graces and makes them more gracious!

(VIII.) "*Meekness*"—patience, under reception of injuries: the very opposite of sudden passion, malice or vengeance.

(IX.) "*Temperance*"—(not teetotalism,) but temperance: moderation: self-control: self-denial: not in *one* thing but in all: in a word—"moderation in all things."

These, Beloved, are the *true ornaments* of the Church of Christ. These are the things signified by the "*silver studs*": the curious work and beautiful—which by the Holy Spirit, are wrought in the soul, when brought to know Christ's salvation!

"*The Righteousness of Christ*," "*is the border of fine gold*," while, "*the studs of silver*,"

by which it is adorned, are those "*beauties of holiness*," those graces of the Spirit—pleasing and acceptable to Him and comely and delightful even before the world.

Reader, do you profess yourself members of the Church of Christ? As such you are or ought to be distinguished in your INDIVIDUAL capacity by the same marks: by the same *ornaments* and insignia as *belongs* to the Church in her *one* capacity, as the Bride and Spouse of Christ

IF THESE MARKS be wanting, what evidence have you that you are united to Christ in any sense?

If you be destitute of these ornaments and insignia, what ground for suspicion that you are self-deceived in resting so securely and confidently in the notion that you are a member of Christ and a child of God?

Oh! does it not behove you to try and examine yourself? Suppose you are self-deceived—suppose you go on to the hour of your departure, self-deceived—or suppose the Lord Christ comes and finds you self-deceived! How unavailing the cry *then*—"Spare me good Lord! Spare thy servant,"—What a tremendous risk you run! What is that risk? The loss of your soul. A lost-soul—Oh! what language can describe it.—It is the loss of every thing that is worth loosing. God's favour lost! Christ's love lost! The Holy Spirit's presence

lost! Eternal rest and joy and peace lost! The company of the just made perfect lost! *Every thing lost but ONE THING.* Oh! most dreadful, overwhelming, incalculable, immeasurable loss! *One thing gained*—the **BOTTOMLESS PIT**:—the never resting reproaches of conscience—“*Son remember*”:—the gnawings of burning pampered lusts, ungratified, unappeased: not one moment of alleviation:—“*not one drop of water.*”—This is the gain—the portion of a self-deceived, lost soul! Oh! its worth while then inquiring am I or am I not in Christ? Has my poor sinful soul been washed in the fountain of His cleansing blood? Am I clothed in His righteousness? Is my soul adorned in God's sight with “*the border of gold?*” Is Christ in me the hope of glory? Am I resting on His fulness and righteousness alone, for mercy and acceptance in the presence of my God—that “*God who can by no means clear the guilty,*” unless the guilty bring a sacrifice sufficient to satisfy the demands of justice, sufficient to exhaust the penalty of a broken law? Can you truly exclaim “*I am?*” Jesus only is my plea for mercy!

Blessed soul! you have the border of gold covering your nakedness and shame. Have you also these ornaments of grace by His Holy Spirit; of which before we have spoken. Are they distinctly seen in your christian character?

You profess to hold communion with him.—This intimates acquaintance. “Now, the Spirit of God gives the lie to that man who professeth to have acquaintance and communion with God and yet is acquainted with and holds communion with worldliness and unrighteousness.”

St. John<sup>1</sup> counts those liars, who profess to be christians and pretend to communion and fellowship with Christ and walk in darkness—i. e. ungodliness and worldliness: being destitute of those fruits of the Holy Ghost, which, in some degree, at least, must be manifest if we be members in very deed of Christ’s Holy Catholic Church.

The great work of the Church on earth, is, by its ordinances and ministers, to make “unholy men more holy,” (to bring souls to Christ, that they may be clothed in “*borders of gold*,” and then build them up in Christ and adorn them with studs of silver.) This “is the work of works.” This lies nearest the hearts of Christ’s ministers, who, ere long, give to him a strict and solemn account of their stewardship.

But where are seen the rows of pearls and chains of pearls?

Oh! Brethren, where are our self-denial and love, and works and labour for Christ? Alas! our silver is become dross and our wine is mixed with water.

1. I. Jno. i. 6.



*"Lord revive Thy work in the midst of us!"*—His power alone can do this.—*"We will make thee."* It is therefore the work of the ever blessed Triune God—*"We."*

Jehovah will finish the work of grace He begins. His love contemplate the highest degree of grace here, and glory hereafter for His Church. "That grace which takes the beggar from the dunghill and raises the poor out of dust, pauses not before it sets them among princes and makes them inherit thrones of glory."

12. *While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.*

13. *A bundle of myrrh is my well beloved unto me ; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts.*

In the Spirit of Prophecy—the Church here testifies of the future blessings of Messiah's reign—when *"out of Zion shall go forth the Law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."*

In that day, the words of this text shall receive their plenary fulfilment.

The "King" of the whole earth<sup>1</sup> shall claim the kingdoms for himself and the knowledge of God cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.<sup>2</sup> Then,

1. Dan. vii. 18—27

2. Hab. ii. 14.

as a "King," He, who once was rejected, shall "sit at His table," manifesting His kingly office and power (as Lord and Christ)—and then to an extent hitherto unknown or experienced, His glorious Gospel, as "spikenard," shall send forth the "sweet savour" of the name of Jesus, and make His grace manifest in every place.

In that day shall the Jew—restored to Divine favour "give life to a dead world"<sup>1</sup>—carrying forth from Jerusalem the "name of Jesus," which, "like ointment of spikenard," very precious, shall be for the healing of the nations.

*"And it shall come to pass in that day, that every one that is left of the nations shall even go up from year to year to worship the King—the Lord of Hosts"—while He sitteth at His table of judgment and authority. And the savour of the Church's holiness, shall send forth, as it were, the smell of spikenard—for, in that day, shall there be upon the bridles of the horses, "Holiness to the Lord."*<sup>2</sup> The external aspect of the Church shall be holy. Domestic life too shall be holy—"for every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be" as the sacred vessels of the tabernacle—filled with the perfume of the savour of Gospel holiness. In that day the Church shall say *"my spikenard doth send forth the smell thereof."*

1. Rom. xi. 15.    2. Zech. xiv. 16.    3. Zech. xiv. 20 21.

As yet, the "Prince of this world," is not finally cast down under our feet. Exalted to "the right hand of God" in glory, the Lord Jesus condescends to dwell in the hearts of His people, and like "a bundle of myrrh," (which by Jacob was esteemed a worthy gift for a Prince<sup>1</sup> and by Moses required as an ingredient for the holy anointing oil:<sup>2</sup> and by the wise men of the east, brought as their choicest present to the Holy Child, Jesus,) "like a bundle of myrrh"—full of "sweet smelling odours"—celebrated alike for its *healing* properties, as well as its *cleansing* power and pleasant perfume, So is Christ to His Church, during the "*night*" of her bridegroom's absence. "To them that believe, He is precious."—

"They love the name of Jesus,  
Emanuel, Christ the Lord;  
Like spikenard on the breezes,  
His name abroad is poured."

"By His stripes they are *healed*." By His blood they are *cleansed*—(the blood of Jesus Christ *cleanseth* from all sin.) "By His Spirit they are made acceptable and meet for the presence of their King—" *being clothed upon with His glorious body whose garments smell of myrrh, aloes and cassia.*"

They who have thus found Christ—"their wisdom, sanctification, and redemption"—value and esteem His presence above all else.

1. Gen. xliii. 11.

2. Ex. xxx. 23.

They desire His presence, in their hearts, during the long "*night*" of their pilgrimage. That which is nearest and most precious, we place in our bosoms both for greater safety, as well as greater honour.

The Church desires, that under every dispensation which may befall her, during the "*night*" of her sojourning here—Jesus would dwell nearest and closest to her heart—" *He shall lie all night between my breasts.*"

14. *My beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of En-gedi.*

All the choicest and most costly productions of nature, are nothing, in comparison with His excellency, who is the "*chiefest among ten thousand and altogether lovely.*"

Nevertheless they serve, by way of comparison, to set forth the delight and pleasure the Church took in Him, whom she again calls her "*beloved,*" and compares to "*a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of En-gedi.*"

As to the perplexing, and in some measure, unedifying interpretations which the learned have suggested, in reference to the particular shrub, ("*copher*")—"camphire:" it is unnecessary here to

speak. Suffice it to say—that whatever the precise nature of the shrub was, to which Solomon referred—it was one notable for its excellencies. Its virtues, like the Sun in the Heavens—were peculiarly suitable to set forth the glories of Jesus, in whom was exhibited all the treasures of the Godhead bodily.

It is however, worthy of consideration, that the Hebrew word—"copher," also signifies "atone-ment," or "propitiation."

In that sense, the Christian Reader will readily see its application to Jesus, who "*bare our sins in His own body on the tree,*" and made "*propitiation for our sins,*"—and thus made us as one with God, through "*the blood of His Cross.*"

The observation of Bishop Patrick, is most striking and precious.

He says the ancient Jewish Doctors, by dividing the Hebrew word "Eshcol," (a cluster) and reading the words thus "*ish-col, copher,*"—learned that mystery which their degenerate children afterwards rejected—the mystery of a suffering Messiah. The words read thus in connexion with the whole of the passages, make the sentence "my beloved is unto me as one that expiates all things."

One would almost have thought that the explanation of this verse, as given in the Talmud—had been written by a Christian, rather than a Jewish

Doctor. It is this—" *He, whose all things are, has atoned for my iniquities.*"

Blessed, happy, Believer—who can thus lay hold of the cluster of those divine blessings—which the atonement of Jesus purchased and His ascension to His Father's Throne in Glory—has secured to all them who by faith, through grace, believe the record of God's eternal love !

15. *Behold, thou art fair, my love ; behold thou art fair ; thou hast doves' eyes.*

16. *Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant : also our bed is green.*

Here we have reciprocal expressions of admiration and fondness between Christ and His Bride—the Church.

We notice it, both here and towards the close of this mysterious Song—that both Christ and His Church become more particular and special in their description of each other's excellencies.

A significant intimation of that same truth which the growing Christian invariably finds—that, as he ripens in Christian experience—the excellencies of Christ seem to ripen and increase too—as well as his own spiritual powers of taste and vision to appreciate and enjoy them.

Addressing this Church, the Lord twice affirms, she is "fair," and then singles out one special instance of her comeliness, one upon which He makes a special remark—" *Thou hast doves' eyes.*"


The Church seems abruptly to interrupt the praises thus lavished upon her: "All my comeliness is from Thyself. Behold it is Thou who art fair, my beloved, yea also pleasant:" Also "*our bed is green,*"—(i. e.) the Church, upon earth is green, flourishing: abounding—both in new converts, as well as in Godly Saints. Trees of righteousness which "are planted in the house of the Lord," and continually watered with the rich dew of His grace—" *flourish in the courts of the House of our God.*"

The meaning and connection of the whole passage is plain, except in that one expression—" *Thou hast Doves' eyes.*"

The Lord commends her—" *Behold thou hast Doves' eyes?*" She refers all her comeliness and fruitfulness to Him and tells Him that His Church was in a flourishing condition—" *Our bed is green.*"

What are we to understand by this figure—" *Doves' eyes?*" What part of the Church is here referred to? And what connection is there in the Church's reply—" *our bed is green!*"

" *Thou hast Doves' eyes.*"

 Gill remarks, with great justness, that minis-

ters of the Gospel, may be regarded with the utmost propriety, as the "eyes" of the Church, and illustrates the remark by the language of Job,<sup>1</sup> "*I was,*" says he, "*eyes to the blind.*"

And so is the faithful minister among his flock, "eyes" to the spiritually blind—as also to them that see.

For, as the natural eye is set upon the highest place of honour in the body—(as a sentinel on the watch-tower) to give warning of approaching danger to the body: so every minister sent of Jesus Christ, is set as a watchman, in His Church, to warn, exhort, encourage and preserve His flock from being scattered.

They are the "*light of the world,*" and more especially are intended to be "*lights of the Church.*"

As the "eyes" of the Church, it is equally their privilege as their duty—to search out the truth as it is in Jesus and bring out of the treasury of His Gospel—truths new and old—to the edifying of the Church and perfecting of the Saints in love.

But, observe, Christ affirms, concerning these "eyes" of the Church—that they are like "*Doves' eyes.*" Precious in His sight, are His faithful ministers. Now, Dove's eyes, are remarkable for their clearness of vision, united with a peculiar expression of meekness and lowliness.

1. Job. xxix. 15.



Would to God, that we, who have taken upon ourselves, the solemn vows of orders—as labourers in Christ's vineyards and ministers of His word and sacraments—did answer to this description !

Of how few individual Churches or Congregations, can Jesus say—“ *Thou hast Doves' eyes !*”—Alas ! how blind are many !

How ignorant are many, who set themselves up teachers of God's heritage !

What little discrimination of truth ! What imperfect vision, and consequently what indistinct declaration of truth !

This, then speaks home to ministers. The commendation bestowed by Jesus upon His faithful watchmen, surely rebukes, most solemnly, many hirelings.

Happy that Church, which possesses a servant of the Lord—whose “ eyes” have been enlightened to see the truth as it is in Jesus !

“ Happy and blessed that man of God, who in manifestation of the truth, commends himself (not only) to every man's conscience in the sight of God”—but, above all, to the Lord himself !

Then, in truth, is “ Christ's bed” (his Church)—wherein souls are begotten<sup>1</sup> “ *green*,” (flourishing and fruitful,) abounding both in holy Saints—who flourish “ like trees planted by the water's side”—

1. I. Pet. i. 23.

as also in new converts to the faith—such as are by means of a faithful, simple, gospel ministry—added continually to the Church.

17. *The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters of fir.*

It seems most agreeable to the general scope of this passage, to consider the “house” as the “*Church of the living God*,” which St. Paul calls “*the house of God*.”<sup>1</sup>

The Jewish Commentators understand it of the Tabernacle and Solomon’s temple, but acknowledge that the house which shall be filled with the glory of the Lord in the day of Israel’s restoration, should be much more glorious than either the Tabernacle or the Temple.

The word in the original is in the plural number, (“houses”)—and hence some Christian interpreters have discovered a reference to those “*many mansions*”<sup>1</sup> in His Father’s house, which Jesus is now preparing for them that love Him.

But, it seems most agreeable to many passages of Holy Writ, to consider the Church of God “militant here on earth,” as intended by this “house.” Thus, as before noticed, St. Paul speaks.<sup>2</sup>—So again,<sup>3</sup> Believers are said to be “*Christ’s house*,”

1. 1. Tim. iii. 15.    2. 1. Tim. iii. 15.    3. Heb. iii. 6.

and, as lively stones, are built up a "*spiritual house*."<sup>1</sup>—There is a peculiar fitness in calling the Church Christ's house.

(L) He is the great Master Builder of it. By His word were the Heavens and the Earth made,<sup>2</sup> and these serve as scaffolding for building that spiritual house which has ever been progressing since man was created and made.

When the fulness of time shall come, this spiritual house shall be finished, "*and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying Grace, Grace unto it.*"<sup>3</sup>

Christ is the great Architect who designed this glorious house before the foundations of the world were laid.—He is the great Master Builder, who "*laid in Zion the chief corner stone.*"

He employs under Him others, who are labourers together with Him. In this how great is His grace and mercy! He has committed the "treasure" of the Gospel to "earthen vessels."<sup>4</sup> He might have done otherwise. Angels and Cherubim, direct from the throne of God, might have been sent forth to proclaim the Gospel and build up this "house:" but, in the most illustrious mercy, He has been pleased to commit to man the word of reconciliation. He employs men of like passions and sympathies

1. II. Pet. v.      2. I. Jno. ii. 3.      3. Zech. iv. 7.

4. II. Cor. iv. 7.

with yourselves, that they may entreat you in Christ's stead—"Be ye reconciled to God." Behold what grace our Lord has displayed in thus honouring ministers—suffering them to labour in building this glorious "house!" How great then is the ministers' work; how solemn his responsibilities!

(II.) There is, also, a peculiar fitness in calling Christ's Church, *His "house,"* because He is the foundation of it.

It is built, as St. Paul says, "*Upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.*"<sup>1</sup>

The Apostles and Prophets are only said to be the foundation of this house, so far as they unite in bearing the same testimony. "*Other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*"<sup>2</sup>

Resting on this everlasting foundation, it is beyond the reach of every foe. The power of the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. The foundations of the earth may be removed—and the pillars thereof thrown down—but "the house" of the Lord, the Church which He hath purchased with His own blood, amidst the "wreck of matter and the crash of worlds," will stand forth "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners."

1. Eph. ii. 20.

2. I. Cor. iii. 11.

(III.) The Church of Christ may also be most suitably called Christ's house, forasmuch as He is the master of it—managing all its affairs, and giving meat to His household in due season. The key of this house hangs at His girdle. "*He openeth and no man shutteth—shutteth and no man openeth.*"<sup>1</sup> "*The government*" of His house is on "*His shoulders.*"<sup>2</sup> He rules His house. He feeds His household. He makes for them "a feast of fat things: a feast of wines on the lees: of fat things full of marrow." This is His banqueting house, into which He brings His people, and "supps with them and they with Him."

As the Master of this house, so he bears its Glory. The great and noble of this world build their splendid mansions, and "call their lands after their own name." Thus, they as masters, declare the glory of their name.

Solomon builded His temple that it might be a monument to the praise and glory of God! And so, "*In the dispensation of the fulness of time,*"<sup>3</sup> (says the Apostle Paul,) "*He will gather together in one, all things in Christ, in whom we also have obtained an inheritance,*" (for what end?)—"that we should be to the praise of his glory," So again, "*Him that overcometh, will I make a pillar*"<sup>4</sup> (a

1. Rev. iii. 7.      2. Is. ix. 6.      3. Eph. i. 10.

4. Rev. iii. 12.

monumental column of praise,) *in the Temple of my God.*" This (house) of the Lord, even His ransomed Church, sets forth His Glory!

Through all eternity, it will manifest the great Builder's glory. Every polished stone in that glorious fabric:—every cedar beam and every rafter of fir, will speak Messiah's glory—" *Its walls shall be salvation—its gates shall be praise!*"

Pause one moment ..... consider this! What is the probability that you will eventually dwell in this "*House of the Lord?*" It is an important inquiry for you to make!

Lay down the book, Reader, and ask yourself this question—Have I any real evidences.....any safe ground.....for considering myself part or parcel of this temple, this spiritual house of Jesus?

It is most true, there is a temple of God—" *a house not built with hands—eternal in the heavens,*"<sup>1</sup> in which the Saints of Jesus Christ shall be gathered.

It is then a solemn question—Do I now form a part of Christ's spiritual house? Have I any reasonable hope of forming a part likewise of that glorious company for whom many mansions are preparing in glory?

Am I now being made ready? Is the preparation already commenced? Has the grace of God separated me from the world which lieth in wicked-

SECRET

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

OFFICE OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL

WASHINGTON, D. C.

15 JANUARY 1945

MEMORANDUM

TO: THE ADJUTANT GENERAL

FROM: THE ADJUTANT GENERAL

SUBJECT: [Illegible]

1. [Illegible]

2. [Illegible]

3. [Illegible]

4. [Illegible]

5. [Illegible]

6. [Illegible]

7. [Illegible]

8. [Illegible]

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11. [Illegible]

12. [Illegible]

13. [Illegible]

14. [Illegible]

15. [Illegible]

16. [Illegible]

17. [Illegible]

18. [Illegible]

19. [Illegible]

20. [Illegible]

In (v. 7.) the Psalmist compares the momentary prosperity of the wicked, to the grass of the field—green to day—burned up and withered to-morrow. But the blessedness of Christ's people, having His righteousness, (the righteousness mentioned in verse 12,) is, by way of contrast, compared to the Cedar of Lebanon, whose strength and beauty, were of such a lasting kind and whose wood was of such a hard durable nature, that naturalists have ascribed to it even eternity, and the people of God, in this respect, are like—“*beams of cedar in the Lord's house.*”

They will endure for ever. They have grace in them that will keep them faithful in all holy obedience and love. Grace, is an eternal principle.

“*Being born again by the Word of God*” &c.<sup>1</sup>

Two things the Holy Ghost saith here by St. Peter. The high original of this new birth—God, for it is by His Word.—(II) Its endless duration—it is “incorruptible.” This follows from the first.—If the principle of life in the soul be incorruptible.....the life itself must be so.—And so again we read our blessed Lord's words—“*Because I live, ye shall live also.*”<sup>2</sup>

Again, cedar-wood is noted for the grateful perfume it gives forth; and in this respect, may Christ's people be said to be like “beams of

1. I. Pet. i. 23.

2. John xiv. 19.



cedar in the Lord's house." We are told by the Psalmist, that the Church of God is clothed with the fine linen which is the Righteousness of the Saints; and that "they smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia."<sup>1</sup> They are like sweet incense: their sacrifices and offerings of love are made acceptable to the Father through Christ, and are unto Him a sweet-smelling savour.

Truly indeed, nothing that we can do in the way of grateful service and obedience, is in itself worthy of the Lord's acceptance. But he is graciously pleased to regard the labours of love of his people, and accept of them as the offering of sweet incense.

If then by the "*house*," in my text, we have Christ's Church—and if by the "*cedar-beams*" the Saints who are His, and on whom He hath set His love—we see two great characteristics in them.

(I.) That they are strong, and firm, and enduring—capable of strengthening and supporting the great fabric of the house. (II.) That they not only are useful, but also pleasing and acceptable—fragrant by their life and conversation, not only to their Lord and Master, but to the Church of which they form such an essential part.

Saints of the most High God! Does the comparison hold good in your particular cases? Are ye like "*cedar-beams*" in the Lord's spiritual temple?

1. Ps. xlv. 8.

Do ye resemble them in the strength and durability of your faith? Are ye like Paul, and James, and Cephas, pillars of strength, "*beams of cedar*," in these shifting, perilous days? Or, as Demas and Diotrophes, clouds tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine?

Ye Saints of God, earnestly and solemnly does the Lord call upon you to be strong—cemented to one another in holy love; and thus grow up as a holy temple in the Lord.

Stand fast, therefore, in the truth. Quit yourselves like men. Be strong and of good courage. Days of rebuke and blasphemy are gathering thickly round the Church of Christ. Be united. Be determined. Cleave to one another in Christ. Then shall the Church of Christ, militant here on earth, for strength and durability of faith, and fragranciness and comeliness of life, be like unto a house, whose beams are "*beams of cedar and its rafters of fir*."

## CHAPTER. II.

### 1. *I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.*

This is so like the language of Him, who “spake as never other man spake” in the days of His flesh, and said—“*I am the Vine*”—“*I am the Good Shepherd*,” that I cannot doubt that it is the Bridegroom, even Jesus, to whom they must be ascribed.

Besides, it is far more likely for Christ to commend His Church, than for His Church to commend itself.

The Church would not be so unmindful of Solomon’s advice “let another praise thee and not thine own lips.”

“*I am the rose of Sharon.*” The rose, in Eastern countries was esteemed the goodliest of all flowers; and those of Sharon the choicest of any in Israel.

The comparison seems evidently intended to set forth His fulness and excellency—in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily: who was “God manifest in the flesh.”

He also adds "*and the lily of the valley*:" foreshadowing that deep humility to which He stooped, when He emptied himself of His glory and assumed our nature and was made in the likeness of sinful man.

Then, indeed, He appeared without either "form or comeliness:" as a "root out of dry ground." When He taught His disciples, saying, "*Learn of me for I am meek and lowly in heart, and give grace to the humble,*" He fulfilled the words of this Song—"I am the lily of the valley."

2. *As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.*

"*As the lily among thorns.*" Christ compares His Church to the "lily." The comparison is most beautiful and appropriate. The lily is the emblem of purity. In the previous verse He does not disdain applying the same comparison to Himself—"I am the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley." For in the days of His humiliation, though brought down to this vale of humiliation, He was pure and spotless as a "lily"—being holy, harmless, and undefiled.<sup>1</sup> And His Church, which "*He hath purchased with His own blood,*" is pure and white in His eyes: clothed with fine linen, clean and white,

1. Heb. vii. 26.

which is the righteousness of the Saints, having all its sins washed out by His most precious blood. It was for this purpose that Jesus gave himself, that He might "*purify for himself a peculiar people,*"<sup>1</sup> and present them to Himself a glorious Church—not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing! If then, Reader, thou art justified by the blood of Jesus Christ: if thy soul hath been washed in that fountain of blood, which was opened for sin and all uncleanness: see in what light thy Saviour regardeth thee—" *As the lily among thorns,*" &c. " *Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.*—(iv. c. 7 v.) The world despises you—derides your claims—sneers at your pretensions. Be it so. It neither knows you nor your Master. But He knows you. Though in the eyes of the ungodly you are "*black as the tents of Kedar,*" in the esteem of your Saviour you are beautiful as the "*lily among thorns!*"

Oh! be amazed at His grace. Be filled with humble adoring gratitude. You are still in the desert. Still in the midst of thorns.

The Church of Christ is like the lily because of its fruitfulness.—"Nothing is more fruitful than the lily, for oftentimes one root send's forth fifty bulbs." And who so fruitful, in every good word and work, as the true Church of Christ: souls begotten again

1. Titus ii. 14.

unto love and the hope of eternal life, and which are watered with the dew of the Holy Spirit. "*They grow as the lily, and cast forth their roots as Lebanon : their branches spread, and their beauty is as the olive tree.*"<sup>1</sup> They "bring forth much fruit," to the glory of their heavenly Father. They do not run along the ground, as the wild plants of the earth : they do not cleave to earthly things : but like the lily, "which in the day is three cubits high," lift up their heads toward Heaven. Their hearts are there. Their treasures are in Heaven. Like the flower of the lily, which is open towards the firmament of the Heavens but shut towards the earth, the Believer's affections, hopes, and desires, are altogether weaned from the earth and its vanities, and set upon heavenly things.

Reader, is it **THUS** with thee ? Do you, in spiritual life, resemble the tall and white lily, lifting up its graceful flower towards the sky ?

Is your soul set on heavenly things ? Can you say, with a Saint of old—" *I delight in the law of God after the inward man ?*"<sup>2</sup>—Are you like the fruitful lily, setting forth the beauty of holiness ?—Or do you find, that, in your case, the comparison does not hold good ?

Whosoever reads, let him understand and know this—if Christ, by His Spirit, has made you willing

1. Hosea xiv. 5.

2. Rom. vii. 22.

in the day of His power—if He has covered you with His own righteousness (that garment of “*fine linen pure and white*”) then be sure you will evidence this by your own personal and increasing likeness to Him: by your fruitfulness in all those things which set forth the holiness and richness of His grace.

But, observe—Christ increaseth this commendation of His Church, by the contrast He draws between “*His love*”—(the Church,) and the wicked—“*the thorns.*”

“*As the lily among the thorns so is my Beloved.*”  
—The Believer growing up in the midst of an ungodly world, is like the lily, in a wilderness of “*briars and thorns.*”

The wicked, who are Christless—are like the thorns and briars—“*The sons of Belial shall be all of them as thorns thrust away, because they cannot be taken with hands.*”<sup>1</sup>

They are worthless and unfruitful towards God!—  
“*Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?*”<sup>2</sup>

They choke the word of life—the good seed—as we read in the Parable of the Sower.

They grieve and hurt the people of God. Lot was pricked with these thorns: for His “*righteous soul was vexed every day by their ungodly deeds and wicked conversation.*”<sup>3</sup>

1. 11. Sam. xiii. 8. 2. Mat. vii. 16. 3. 11. Pet. ii. 8.

And what child of God, has not, in some measure, experienced this? Like a solitary lily, in a household of thorns, your lot may be cast. Day by day, your soul is vexed, by what you see, and hear, and feel. Marvel not at this. Be not discouraged, although you stand alone, among "thorns and briars!" You are not alone, for He is with you—who walked in the furnace of fire, with Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego. You will be soon transplanted to another garden, where neither "briar nor thorn" springs up, and into which nothing that "worketh abomination or maketh a lie can enter."<sup>1</sup>

But, the end of the ungodly will be like that of "briars and thorns."—They will be bound in bundles and burned with unquenchable fire, "*as thorns cut up shall they be burned in the fire.*"<sup>2</sup>

Oh! thoughtless sinners, hear the word of the Lord! He compares you to thorns. Whatever you may be in your own opinion, or that of the world's: however amiable may be your natural character and disposition:—however lofty the rank and position you occupy:—this is what Christ thinks of you;—like briars and thorns—useless cumberers of the ground, and "fit only for the BURNING?"

Oh! Christless soul, think of your condition.—

1. Rev. xxi. 27.

2. Is. xxxiii. 12.



Think of what awaits you, if you die Christless! Hear the lamentation of Christless sinners—“*Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings.*”<sup>1</sup>

Listen to the anguish of a Christless soul—“*And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue: for I am tormented in this flame.*”<sup>2</sup>

Christless soul, how will you dwell with devouring fire and with everlasting burnings?

Ah! you do not think of this now! You cry peace to your soul, “*eat, drink, and be merry,*” &c.

You live merrily, as if you had no eternity to think of! I warn you, that the torments of hell, await every soul that passes to eternity Christless!

Oh! if you die, without having Christ as your Saviour, you will wish in vain, you had never been born!—There is much infidelity abroad on this solemn subject.

But, if God's word be true—on which all our hopes are founded—then it is clearly revealed to us that “*the wicked shall be cast into hell and all the people that forget God.*”<sup>3</sup>

It is a fire—a “devouring fire—yea, a “burn-

1. Is. xxxiii. 14. 2. Luke xvi. 23—24. 3. Ps. ix. 17.

ing tempest.”—an “everlasting fire”—an “unquenchable flame”—“whose smoke goeth up for ever and ever !”

What figures of speech could have been employed more terrible than these ! Had it been called eternal solitude, that would have been awful ; or eternal darkness, that would have been insupportable : but, how terrific.....everlasting fire—in which the thorns, (the Christless sinner,) must dwell for ever, in that “pit,” which St. John seven times calls “bottomless.”<sup>1</sup>

Christless soul, I warn you, I solemnly and tenderly warn you, by this “everlasting flame”—by this “bottomless pit”—by this “unquenchable fire of God’s wrath”—flee from the wrath to come. Flee to Him, who is as willing, as He is also able to save the greatest sinner, and make that sinner for purity and for beauty of soul—like a “*lily among thorns.*”

Pause one moment—thoughtless worldling, and compare your state and future prospects with those of the Believer in Jesus.

They are as “*Lilies among thorns.*” Their life is now hid. Their glory doth not yet appear ; but, in future ages, they will flourish in a kindlier soil and a more genial clime than that of earth ! But what awaits you ? Now, you are as thorns

1. Rev. ix. 1—2—11.—xi.—7.—xvii. 8.—xx. 1—3.

and briars fit only for the burning. It doth not yet appear what ye shall be even here. But this we know, that "*whatsoever ye sow, that shall ye also reap,*"<sup>1</sup> &c.

Poor worldling, how little dost thou consider thy poverty and true wretchedness! Thou art selling thy precious soul for a few months and years of careless gaiety and thoughtless indulgence!

Oh! how deeply will you mourn your choice!—The joy of the world and the laughter of fools is like crackling of thorns under a pot<sup>2</sup>—a sudden blaze and then darkness for ever!

Soon thy feasts will be over! The noise of the viol and the voice of singing men and women, will soon be hushed amidst the wailing of despair. Beauty, and rank, and splendour, will have vanished like a dream.

The voice of the Arch-angel and the trump of God.....The shout of the ransomed, and the wailing of the lost—will call thee at last to a sense of thy madness!

Then, what a reckoning awaits thee, if Christ finds you Christless....."*He cometh! He cometh to judge the world.*"!!

What a sentence after that reckoning! A sentence which excludes you from Paradise, where the flowers of Christ's garden flourish in eternal bloom—

1. Gal vi. 7—8.

2. Eccl. vii. 6.

a sentence which writes no "new name" upon thy forehead, nor seals you with the seal of the sons of God—but, a sentence which condemns you to the second death.....which leaves to you nothing, save a dungeon of misery, on whose dreary walls are written thy condemnation in letters of fire, "lamentation, and mourning, and woe!"

Christless soul! why will you die, seeing God hath said, "I have no pleasure at all in the death of any sinner?"

Listen to this record of Divine mercy and love! Why should everlasting burnings be your portion? Jesus once suffered that it might be possible for God to deliver sinners like you from suffering. The pains of hell took hold on him.....that they might never take hold of them which should believe on His name!

He was brought into the dust of death—as enduring wrath for sinners! How then can you think of neglecting such a salvation?

*"Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"*<sup>1</sup>

1. Heb. ii. 1—2.

Behold, the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth—that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, “*thou shalt be saved!*”

3. *As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.*

The Church replies to the commendation of her Lord, by declaring His excellencies under a new figure.

*“As the apple tree among the trees of the wood.”*

There are peculiar properties belonging to the apple-tree, which, in a figure, serve faintly to set forth the peculiar excellencies of our Beloved Lord. Although it is reckoned inferior in its appearance as compared with the oak of Bashan or the cedar of Lebanon, it is a very fruitful tree.

And, though Jesus, in the days of His flesh—when He appeared among men was without form or comeliness, He “*was full of grace and truth.*”

In Jesus, all the “*fulness of the Godhead dwelleth bodily.*”<sup>1</sup> *He is Joseph’s antitype, who is*

1. Col. ii. 9.

*called "a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over the wall."*<sup>1</sup>

As a fruit-laden apple-tree, in the midst of the barren trees of the forest—abounding with luxuriant shade as well as the most delicious fruit, so is Jesus, manifest in the flesh, to the Believer's soul.

As the boughs, laden with fruit, bend towards earth, with the burden they carry, and so may be easily reached—so does He graciously bend down towards His people—giving them grace and strength to help in every time of need.

What is more beautiful to behold, than the apple tree, laden with rich and precious fruit, especially when placed in contrast with the wild trees of an Eastern forest? It is not indeed so majestic as the cedar, or so stately as the fir tree, but, when laden with fruit, is far more acceptable to the weary parched traveller, than either. It both furnishes a cool shade from the scorching rays of the sun, and provides delicious fruit, most sweet and acceptable to the pilgrim's taste.

And, see you not here, a lively picture of the God-man? When He manifested himself to the world—He came as a servant—as the reputed son of a carpenter. He was "*like a tender plant springing up out of a dry ground,*" possessing, in outward appearance, but little either of the majesty

1. Gen. xlix. 23.

of the cedar or stateliness of the fir tree.

*"He was a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief."*—"His face was so marred more than any man's<sup>2</sup>—men hid their faces from him—they saw no beauty in Him"

They scornfully asked, "*Is not this the Carpenter's son?*" Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?

What, is thy Beloved more than another Beloved?—Our Beloved is as "*the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the valley.*" Possessor of all the blessings of the everlasting covenant—its "surety"—"mediator," and "messenger" He is full of grace and truth. As the "*apple-tree,*" for fruitfulness and beauty, among the trees of the wood, so is Jesus among the sons of God.

You see what the Church, (taught and inspired by the Holy Ghost,) thinks of Jesus. Let me ask you this question, "*What do you think of Christ?*" Do you think of Him as the most precious Saviour, whom you need above all things? Do you esteem HIM—not His work only—not the truth only which relates to Him and clusters around Him—but *Himself* do you regard as "Chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely?"

You have felt sin to be an intolerable burden—and the remembrance of it grievous. You know that the "law of God is just and true" in con-

1. Is. liii. 2—3.

2. Is. lii. 14.

vincing you and condemning you—because of sin.

Well then, have you taken the whole burden of your sin to Jesus?—" *Oh ! Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world have mercy upon me.*" Have you not found mercy? Have you not found peace?

Have you not felt that as the *apple-tree* among the trees of the wood, so is the work and person of Jesus!

" *I sat down under His shadow with great delight.*" To such as believe, Christ is precious. To the old Testament saints He was so. They looked through types and sacrifices to Jesus, and thus sitting under His shadow, waited for the consolation of Israel. But there is the idea of enjoyment and refreshment in these words.—(I.) A shadow, especially that of a green tree, protects from heat. Jesus by the atonement and satisfaction He made to God's justice, has delivered His people from the wrath to come, and will for ever screen them from it. Wrath will overwhelm the Christless. But not one drop shall fall—not one ray of heat shall scorch those who are under the shadow of Christ's cross. His love protects them. (II.) The shadow of a green tree is likewise most refreshing, especially in hot climates. And such is the shadow which Jesus has provided. Christ is to the weary harassed soul of His desciple, most delightful. (III.) This shadow



is fruit producing. The shade of some green trees is injurious to plants that grow up under them, that of others is very nourishing and fructifying. Such unquestionably is Christ's shadow. They that dwell under His shadow shall "revive as the corn and grow as the vine, and the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon."<sup>1</sup>

All the fruitfulness of God's saints, comes from Jesus; for unless they abide in and under Him, they can bring forth no fruit. But not to draw out the parallel beyond due limits, observe,—until by Grace you are taught your deep need of Jesus, and conscious of that need you sit down under the shadow of His cross, will you enjoy that "great delight."

*"I sat down."* They that use such words do plainly declare that they find Jesus to be most suitable and necessary for their peace.

Apply this truth. Have I done this? Have I sat down under the shadow of Jesus? Believe me, you may have Christ in your head, Christ in your ears, Christ on your tongue,—you may read of Christ, speak of Christ, preach of Christ, and yet be destitute of any saving interest in His covenant of mercy!

And will this profit you? Nothing short of an experimental personal appropriation of Christ and His salvation, by faith, can warrant us adopting the beautiful and blessed language of the Church.

1. Hosea xiv. 7.

See to it that you have Christ in your hearts and not in the head only.

Alas! "many have gone laden with knowledge to hell. There is a twofold knowledge—the one is common but not saving—the other is not common but saving."

"Common knowledge only floats in the head, but doth not influence the heart. This knowledge reprobates may have. Balaam saw Christ from the tops of the rocks and the hills. Saving knowledge doth include both the assent of the mind and the consent of the will. Saving knowledge of Christ is thorough knowledge joined with affection. This leadeth unto eternal life. This knows and loves and experiences delight in Christ as the Saviour of the soul. All else is an impertinence and laden with damnation." It was this saving knowledge that the Church possessed and therefore was able to say—"I sat down under his shadow with great delight and his fruit was sweet to my taste

A Believer not only sits down under Christ's shadow, but finds there great delight. What delight in religion! what joy in the Gospel!

Surely, says the world, that is the language of enthusiasm and hypocrisy!

*"I sat down with great delight"* says the Believer

*"Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her*

*paths are Peace*" says the wise Prince of Israel.  
"Let God be true, and every man a liar."

A Christian has joys with which a stranger doth not intermeddle.

Wherefore then can so few of us take up this language? Is it not because we sit down under other trees. Behold, there is a worm at their roots! They will very soon wither and die! Then, when the heat of God's indignation smiteth, where is the shadow under which you can flee?

As ever you look for true and lasting peace—take heed you do not sit down under any shadow but that of the Cross! Let no man deceive you!—Many come in Christ's name—saying I am Christ, and they shall deceive many. But, be not you deceived. Behold, I have warned you.

Take heed, you do not deceive yourself. Be not tempted in any wise, to sit under your own shadow making your zeal, your faith, your repentance, your religious duties, your outward privileges and Church ordinances, the shadows beneath which you shelter your soul.

Lay not your sins upon them instead of Jesus—Put not the sacraments in the place of Him who instituted them. Forget not, that He appointed them not to *procure*, but to *proclaim*<sup>1</sup> remission of sin through another, even through Himself!

1. Luke xxii. 17—20. Acts ii. 38—39.

Neither look to your own graces—(the work of the Spirit in you,) or your own frames and feelings—(the result oftentimes) of mere religious sentiment and romance. But look to this one thing—that before that great and dreadful day of the Lord—when the “Light of the sun shall be as the light of seven days,”—and the fury of the Lord burn like a fire—consuming all false refuges of lies (I warn you look to this) that the Cross of Jesus shelter you and the love of Jesus overshadow you.

Sit continually under his shadow. “*He that dwelleth, (mark that word) in the secret of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.*”<sup>1</sup>

Child of God, hast thou wandered from Christ’s presence and gone after other lovers? May the Lord, in mercy, hedge up your way with thorns! May He restore you to your first, and only safe and pleasant resting-place!

Return, return, O Shulamite! Take counsel from the faithful and true witness. Strengthen the things that remain and are ready to die. Return again to to the Shepherd and Bishop of thy soul. Sit down beneath his shadow, and again thou shalt have great delight.

Pilgrim of Christ, you will soon reach your eternal resting-place! Beneath the Tree of Life

1. Ps. xci. 1.

you will find eternal rest. All shadows will have passed away. Figures of speech will then be realities! You will be for ever with the Lord.<sup>1</sup> You will sit no longer beneath His shadow, but in His presence.

Yes! even with that same Jesus whose head was crowned with thorns, and whose hands and feet were pierced! You shall sit down with Him with great delight! Oh! think sometimes of the exceeding weight of glory that is laid up for you! It would be much to see Enoch, and Abraham, and Moses, and Elias: to see Paul and the disciple who leaned on Jesus' bosom: to share their fellowship—to talk with them on the things of God! But how much more to sit down with Jesus!

Think upon this glorious prospect! Amidst ceaseless, restless activity, come aside for a moment of repose and meditation. Give a moment's rest to your wearied spirit. Sit down under the shadow of these great and precious promises, and "*feed among the lilies.*"

*"I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste."*

"His fruit."—(I.) His, by covenant with the Father.

All the blessings of grace which make up the everlasting gospel covenant, are in Christ's hands. They have been placed there by the Father, who

1. Thes. iv. 17.

“hath committed all judgement unto the Son,”<sup>1</sup> “who also quickeneth whom He will.”

(II.) His, by actual purchase.<sup>2</sup>

He procured them. They are all gifts to us of free grace, but Jesus obtained them all. They come to us sprinkled with His precious blood.<sup>3</sup>

(III.) His, emphatically, because in Him “all fulness dwelleth.” Every grace in its fulness is in Jesus. “*In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.*”<sup>4</sup> In His humiliation He was full of grace and truth—how emphatically so now, as our advocate in Heaven.

But what are these fruits of Jesus Christ which the Believer finds by experience so sweet to his taste? Doubtless, every gift and mercy, temporal or spiritual, is from Christ.

In this sense “the voice of rejoicing is in the Tabernacles of the righteous.”<sup>5</sup> They see a Saviour’s love in every comfort they have. This makes mercies more merciful. And even though afflictions be mingled with their mercies they know that even these come from Him who does not willingly chasten his people. Every apple has some acidity in it. And the “fruits” which Jesus gives to his Church are likewise of a mingled kind. Though their teeth be set on an edge by the

1. Jno. v. 22.      2. Eph i. 14.      3. Acts xx. 28.

4. Col. ii. 9      5. Ps cxviii. 15.

“sour grapes” of trial and affliction, their taste is afterwards found to be sweet and beneficial to the Believer’s soul.

But rather by the fruits here so emphatically called Christ’s, we may understand those blessings which immediately result from the propitiation, resurrection, and intercession of the Lord Jesus. The language of this verse is evidently the language of one, who having been deeply convinced of the wrath of God against the soul that sinneth: having fruitlessly sought peace of mind and a quiet resting place, at last found peace and comfort in Jesus: “sat down under the shadow of his cross” with “great delight,” and feasted his soul upon those fruits which Jesus bestows upon his people as the fruits of His redemption.

To you that believe the fruit of Christ’s propitiation is sweet:

By this act of propitiation Jesus satisfied the justice of that Holy God who by “no means can clear the guilty.”

*“He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him: and with his stripes we are healed.”<sup>1</sup>*

By virtue of these—by “His agony and bloody sweat”—by “His cross and passion”—by “His pre-

1 Isai. liii. 3.

cious death and burial"—voluntarily borne by him, the holiness of God was honoured and the mercy of God displayed. Jesus took upon himself the curse due to sin; "He himself bare our sins in his own body."<sup>1</sup>

And thus, by His propitiation once made, the weakest as well as the strongest Believer, has remission of sin, simply because his sufferings have been accepted of God so that "He can be just and yet the justifier of them that believe."<sup>2</sup> Oh taste the precious fruits of Christ's atonement! Consider the hopeless position you must have occupied if Christ had not suffered in the flesh, if His sufferings had not been complete and perfect and sufficient! Consider that sentence "*The soul that sinneth it shall die.*"<sup>3</sup> Yes, "Die"!—that is the irrevocable sentence. The lake of fire whose smoke goeth up for ever and ever proclaims what that death must be! Consider too that this is the sinner's due. The sinner as such, must suffer. The great Law-giver is bound in justice to punish. Consider these things. Look back for one moment to the agonies of Jesus. See Him, on the cross. It is for you He bleeds. Remember from what a hell He saves you!—the anguish of eternal despair from which He delivers you! Will you not say of the blessings which flow from the atonement of Jesus—"this fruit is sweet to my taste?"

1. I. Pet. ii. 24.    2. Rom. iii. 26.    3. Ezek. xviii. 4.



Here is salvation for your soul provided ! Here is deliverance from torment provided ! Here is acceptance with God completed ! Sweet, most sweet they are, for they are the real unmistakeable tokens of that love which was stronger than death, and which many waters of cruel persecution could not quench. It is a sweet thing, is it not, to be loved by others ? The heart even of the natural man yearns after it. It must have some object of love, and it longs to be loved in return. But oh, how sweet to the soul to be thoroughly sure of being loved with that love of Jesus, " which passes knowledge " !

This assurance you may possess. It is no phantom you pursue in seeking and praying for it. Sit down under the shadow of His Cross, and read in the very blood which he shed,—“ There is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.”<sup>1</sup> Realise this in the view of eternity, of a descending Judge, and the great white throne, and is not the assurance of the love of Jesus sweet to your soul to feed upon ?

The fruits of Christ's ascension are also sweet. As there was a necessity for Christ's sufferings, so also for His exaltation. “ Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory ? ”<sup>2</sup>

He gave a triumphant proof that the payment He

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1. Rom. viii. 1.

2. Luke xxiv. 28.

had made was commensurate with the debt, when He rose up from the Mount of Olives to God's right hand. He thus gave positive assurance His payment was accepted by God himself.

He fulfilled all righteousness, satisfied all the demands of divine Justice, conquered death and hell, and opened "the gates of Heaven to all Believers."

Knowing that *my* Redeemer liveth, knowing that He hath entered glory, (the first fruits of them that slept) I also am assured that my soul is both freed from eternal death, and adopted into the family of God, and if a Son, then an heir of God, and joint heir with Christ.<sup>1</sup>

This then is the joy and exceeding great rejoicing of the soul that hath union with Jesus by living faith, and a communion with Him by the power of His Resurrection, that it shall also assuredly have a communion with Him in His coming glory. And this assurance is one of the fruits of our Saviour's exaltation, and it is sweet to the Believer's soul.

The fruits of Christ's intercession must not be forgotten. As He was once a Priest upon the Cross, making atonement; so is He a Priest now in the court of Heaven, pleading that atonement before the tribunal of justice.<sup>2</sup> The accuser of the Brethren accuseth you before God, but your Priest is there to answer for you.

1. Gal. iv. 7.

2. Heb. iv. 14.

The holy and inflexible Law of Sinai condemns you before that tribunal, but Jesus as your High Priest stands there, who for you fulfilled that Law and made it honourable.

Yes! Christ hath entered Heaven, "now to appear in the presence of God for you." As Moses, forty days after his conducting the Israelites out of Egypt, ascended the Mount, and while the people were in conflict with the Amalekites, prayed for them, so that they prevailed;<sup>1</sup> so Jesus himself, forty days after His Resurrection, ascended the Mount of the Lord, and there, as an advocate, pleads for his people, giving them grace and strength for every time of need. How "sweet" are the "fruits" of Christ's advocacy to a Believer's soul! How gracious is the character in which He is revealed to us as an advocate and intercessor!<sup>2</sup>

He is a compassionate intercessor. We have not an intercessor which cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities.<sup>3</sup> He was made like unto His Brethren, that He might be merciful. He was a man of sorrows that He might be a Lord of compassion. He was "God-man" upon earth. He is God-man in Heaven. How sweet the fruits you may gather from the compassion of this intercessor. Are you in deep waters of spiritual or earthly troubles? Have the deep waters "come in even to your soul?"

Ex. xvii. 11. 2. I Jno. ii. 1. 3. Heb. iii. 1.—vii. 1.

Sit down under the shadow of Jesus' Cross. Take the fruits which are there. Carry your sorrows, your doubts, and your fears, to that compassionate High Priest. He will not rebuke you. He can be touched with the feelings of your infirmity, having in like manner been tempted. In the agony of His soul, He once exclaimed, "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*" Remember too, Jesus is not only a compassionate intercessor. He is likewise a most ready and efficient advocate.

You can never go to Him and find Him absent from His throne. He is always there. Go when you will, He is always ready to help, and comfort, and sustain His waiting people. He is also a continual advocate. He "ever liveth to make intercession for us."<sup>1</sup> His intercession is like His life, without end. As He died once to accomplish our redemption, so He lives always to apply to His people's souls the rich blessings of that redemption. These Beloved are some of the fruits which Jesus gives His people to feed upon. Oh! wonder that you do not esteem more highly the sweet fruits of Jesus' intercession! Behold, He is alive for evermore! He is interceding now for you! Is not this truth precious to your soul? Will it not be so in your dying hours? Daily, yea, hourly—O Believer, you will feel your weakness and mourn over the sin

1. Heb vii. 24—25.

that dwelleth in you, but remember this word—  
“*If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father Jesus Christ the righteous, and He is the propitiation for our sins.*”<sup>1</sup>

You have one in Heaven who makes intercession on your behalf, and presents before the throne of God for you, his own sinless and perfect work of righteousness.

4. *He brought me to the banquetting house, and his banner over me was love.*

“*He brought me to the banquetting house.*”

The marginal reading here is worth notice:—  
“The house of wine.” Solomon doubtless refers to the customs of the age in which he lived. It was esteemed a mark of great condescension and love on the part of any great personage to invite another to his banquetting house. The person so invited might consider him or herself highly favoured. Thus  
“*Haman said moreover, yea, Esther the queen did let no man come in with the king unto the banquet that she had prepared but myself; and to morrow am I invited unto her also with the king.*”<sup>2</sup>

Among the many natural objects which God has been pleased to use in Holy Writ, whereby to con-

1. I. Jno. ii. 1.

2. Esther v. 4.

vey spiritual truths—that of wine is employed as typifying most high and holy blessings. Thus Isaiah:—“ *Oh, every one that thirsteth, come to the waters, and he that hath no money ; come ye, buy, and eat ; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.*”<sup>1</sup>

Here wine figuratively represents gospel blessings. When therefore we find the Church brought into the “banqueting house,” the “house of wine,” we have no difficulty in discovering that by such an expression we may most properly understand those “good things” of the covenant of grace, “those unsearchable riches of Christ,” those streams of gospel mercy which make glad the souls of Christ’s people.

For consider all the precious promises and spiritual blessings and needful provisions which the gospel covenant so richly and plentifully supplies, and may it not well be termed a “banqueting house”—“a house of wine?”

The Holy Scripture may be intended here. It is no forced application of the figure to say, that this blessed book is to every Believer’s soul a “banqueting house.” Herein is to be found the hidden manna and the wine of the kingdom, for the saints of God ; “milk also for babes, and meat for strong men.” “It contains all precious substance” There is gold

finer than the gold of Havilah or California. It teacheth wisdom; the merchandise of which is better than the merchandise of silver, and more precious than rubies of the East. It giveth "words to cleanse the young man's ways;" statutes to delight the aged man's soul; testimonies to refresh the fainting spirit; precepts to quicken the doubting soul. Language fails to tell of the excellencies of the "wine of joy" this "banqueting house" contains. It giveth wisdom to the simple, to the young men wisdom and discretion. It ministers comfort to the mourner, and hope and peace to the dying. *"It is a lamp to the feet, and a lantern to our path. Sweet are its words unto the taste, yea, sweeter than honey to the mouth!"*<sup>1</sup>

Happy the soul that can without hypocrisy say *"Oh, how I love thy law, it is my meditation all the day long."* *"I have esteemed the words of Thy mouth, more than my necessary food."* Again, by the "banqueting house" of Christ be intended the spiritual blessings enjoyed in partaking of the ordinances of Christ's Church. These are feasts of fat things provided for and enjoyed by the sheep of His flock. These are like the "wells of Baca,"<sup>2</sup> and the palm trees of the desert. They refresh the souls of the weary as they go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appearing before God! Oh,

1. Ps. cxix. 103—105.      2. Ps. lxxxiv. 1—2, 6—7.

“how amiable are the tabernacles of the Lord of Hosts” to the Lord’s people! How often do they find “Him whom their souls love!”—How often able to exclaim with Israel’s sweet singer, “*My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord, my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.*”

Yes, Believers, be ye sure of this if to Christ’s house you come with waiting, praying souls; seeking and expecting a blessing from Him, if thus you “keep by the footsteps of the flock, and feed beside the shepherd’s tents,” you shall of a truth find that a day spent in the courts of the Lord’s house, is better than a whole life spent in the palaces of Princes! As you travel wearily and sadly through the dry and parched desert of this life’s pilgrimage, you will assuredly find that the tabernacles of God in the land, are verily “banqueting houses” of the great king himself.

And how came the Believer into such close fellowship with Jesus?

“He brought me,”<sup>1</sup> is the confession of every such favoured disciple. Not by the “will of the flesh,” but by the “favour”<sup>2</sup> of the Lord, is the soul brought into fellowship both of the sufferings of Jesus and the “banquet” of His grace and love.

Outward church membership, and participation

1. Jno. i. 13.

2. Ps. xliv. 3.



of the church's ordinances, ministries, and sacraments; (through blessed means of grace,) are not grace itself, but means through which grace is bestowed and confirmed.

You may enjoy them all and yet be destitute of the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Such there are among us:—spots in our holy feasts of charity. They touch and taste divine and blessed truths and ordinances, but are dead to all spiritual life and love for Jesus, or interest in His covenant of grace.<sup>1</sup>

If by the “banqueting house” we understand the Holy Scripture then to be brought into it, is to have the eyes of our understanding opened so as to behold the wonderful things contained therein; it is to have our hearts so affected as to taste the sincere milk of the word, receive its blessed promises to the joy and sanctification of our soul.

It is not every man who thus finds the statutes of the Lord to be the joy of his heart. How many are there who have read them for years, and yet have never found that blessed book to be a “banqueting house” for their soul? Perhaps it has been so with yourself. Your bible you have read and studied with this commentator and that, and yet never found in it a “banquet.” You admire its contents. Its grand and simple eloquence, its sublime and lofty poetry, its truth and pathos thrill your very

1. Mat. xxvi 49.

soul ! But that is all. There your acquaintance with it ceases. And why ? Because you read it not with faith ! You read it without seeking or receiving the gift of that spirit of truth, who can alone display the truth to your souls. I counsel you therefore, honour God the Holy Ghost when you read or meditate on God's word. It is His word. Holy men of old wrote as they were inspired by Him.<sup>1</sup>

The experience therefore of every Believer in Jesus will accord exactly with the expression " He brought me into His " banqueting house." You did not bring yourself. It was Jesus who lead you<sup>2</sup> by His spirit. His grace chose you not for works of righteousness that you had done, neither for works which he foresaw you would do, but as Paul saith to Timothy, according to " his own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began !"<sup>3</sup>

Behold then the goodness of the Lord ! Marvel at His wondrous condescension ! He who is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords has called you and brought you into His banqueting house." " O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God !" He passed by Angels who long to look into these things. He passed by Patriarchs and Prophets who desired to see and know these things, and has revealed them unto you !

1. II. Peter i. 21.    2. Jno. x. 3.    3. II. Tim. i. 9.

Church of Jesus Christ see that you walk worthy of Him who hath thus brought you into His "banqueting house." As He which hath called you is holy, so ought ye to be holy in all manner of life and conversation!

"*His banner over me was love.*"

A banner or standard set up is a signal of war. (Jer. vi. 12. 27.) The Church of Christ here on earth is a Church *militant*. Hence she is in this Song represented as "terrible as an army with banners." Her enemies are both within and without. She has foes within her very fold, hypocrites, and heretics, wolves in sheep's clothing! She has foes innumerable without,—the world, the flesh, and the devil! Against these the Church of Christ as a body, and every member of the same in his or her individual capacity is to contend manfully! Christ is the great captain under whose banner they fight!

Forget not then, Christian Believers, ye are soldiers! Solemnly pledged you are by promises and vows the most sacred, to fight manfully under Christ's banner! What (we might ask) do you know of this warfare? *Here* are the tokens of joy and victory! Where the trophies of *your* success? St. Paul says, "we are more than conquerors through Him who hath loved us."<sup>1</sup>

Why does the Lord bring you into His "banquet-

1. Rom. viii. 37.

ing house? That you may be strong for the battle.

Therefore learn that your strength lies in Him. "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might."<sup>1</sup> The Lord giveth strength to His people." Seek for it then in His "banqueting house." Put on the whole armour of God, the helmet of salvation, the breast-plate of faith, the girdle of sincerity, the sandals of the gospel. Take also the shield of faith and the sword of the spirit which is God's word. Go forth thus in the name of the God of Israel and the Lord, even thy Redeemer cause thee to prosper!

A banner (Ps. lx. 3.) is also a token of protection (Exod. xvii. 15.)

Christ's true disciples who have been brought into His "banqueting house," know their security!

His banner which is over them encourages them. Jehovah-nissi is their watchword. Happy are the people that are in such a case—yea, blessed are the people who have the banner of the Lord Jesus over them! Nothing can really harm them! Nothing need disturb their peace. For when the enemy cometh in like a flood, then the spirit of the Lord will lift up his standard against him. On the broad folds of that banner is written "love."

A banner is a token of victory. When a city or a fortress is taken by the enemy, the banner is displayed by the victorious party as the sign of victory.

1. Eph. vi. 11—17.

When Jesus brings his own into His "banqueting house" and displays over them the banner of His love, it is the sign of victory and the pledge of the future glorious consummation of all things. Now we see through a glass darkly. Earth is at present the scene of Satan's victory—the platform of sins' triumph. But shall it always be so? Shall this earth, the scene of Jehovah's power and goodness, the spot on which the God-man tabernacled, where he displayed the power of Godhead with the deep humiliation of manhood; shall this earth always remain the kingdom of the prince of darkness?

God forbid! The banner of victory already waves over it! Jesus, the great conquerer, shall reign! The rebuke of His people shall be taken away, (Isaiah xxv. 6.) Creation shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Soon that bright resurrection morning will gladden this weary world, bringing victory to the saints of Christ, and redemption to the groaning earth.<sup>1</sup>

5 *Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for  
I am sick of love.*

*"When the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon's wisdom, and the house that he had built, and*

1. Zech. xiv. 20—21.

*the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cupbearers, and his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the Lord*" it is said "*there was no more spirit in her.*"<sup>1</sup>

Greater ones than either Solomon or the queen of Sheba are before us here. Yet the fainting spirit of this queen, as she beheld the wisdom and glory of the king of Israel, beautifully typifies the overpowered soul of the Believer, whose rapturous delights at the discoveries and enjoyments of Christ's love and presence are expressed in this verse.

The words are highly figurative—expressive of an earnestness of affection for the person of Christ, which, to the natural man is perfectly incomprehensible.

Such fore-tastes of heavenly enjoyments—such glimpses of the future glory in the presence of the King, when His throne shall be established and His table spread, makes the soul of the waiting Believer faint within him—not only with amazement, but with longing desires also to "depart, and be with Christ!" Hence the cry for supportment.

"*Flagons*" were vessels chiefly used for *wine* in banquets. Thus we find at the marriage<sup>2</sup> of Cana in Galilee, where Jesus "turned the water into wine"—there were stone water-pots or "*flagons*"—

I. I. Kings, x. 4—5.

2. Jno. ii. 6.

in which the wine was conveyed into the banqueting room.

By a figure of speech (Hos. iii. 1.) "*flagons*" are put for the wine contained in them, just as the cup is (Luke xxii. 20.) The words then "*stay me with flagons*" amount to this: "strengthen me, refresh me with larger communications and richer experience of the wine of Thy love."

In the second verse of the first chapter, the church declares how highly she esteemed Christ's love—"Thy love is better than wine." Where, (as before shown) under the figure wine, we are to understand the choicest dainties, delights and vanities of earth, its banquets, its comforts, its pleasures and its profits. None of these things a child of God has any taste for. The love of Christ is far sweeter, far more delightful, far more desirable; "*It is better than wine.*"

It is then the cry of the thirsty soul, crying out for the living Lord. "As the hart panteth after the cool water-brooks,"<sup>1</sup> when exhausted by the chase and hunted down by her pursuers, so the spiritual Christian earnestly seeks after a larger measure and a fuller experience of that love of Jesus which passeth knowledge! Like the "two daughters of the horse-leach which cry unceasingly, give, give," like the earth which drinketh in the rain, and still

1. Ps. xlii. 1.

thirsteth for more, so is every child of God daily asking, daily desiring more grace, more faith, more love.

“*Stay me with flagons*”—but she rests not here; she enlargeth her desires. — “*Comfort me with apples.*” As in the former part of her request, the church plainly has reference to the “banqueting house” into which she had been brought; so in this to that “*apple tree*” (verse 3.), whose fruit was so sweet to her taste.

By these apples we may understand the hopes and promises of the gospel which, when “fitly spoken,” are “like apples of gold in pictures of silver.”<sup>1</sup>

How comforting to the child of God are the glorious doctrines of grace! How precious Jesus is to them which believe!

“How sweet the name of Jesus sounds

In a Believer’s ear,

It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,

And drives away his fear.”

How comforting to the Believer’s soul are the great and glorious doctrines of grace, such for instance as the Divine sovereignty<sup>2</sup>—the soul’s justification by faith<sup>3</sup>—the sanctification by the Spirit<sup>4</sup>—the final perseverance of Believers,<sup>5</sup> and the future

1. Prov. xxv. 11.

2. Job xxiii. 13.—Isai. xl. 13—14.—Rom. xi. 34.

3. Rom. viii. 33.      4. Rom. xv. 16.—Jno. xvii. 17—19.

5. Jno. xvii. 11—12.



consummation and restitution of all things at the coming and glory of Jesus !<sup>1</sup>

Brethren Believers, in the hour of temptation or feebleness, when the flesh is weak and the spirit buffeted by Satan, when doubts and fears torment your soul, how welcome are "the apples" of comfort which the promises and consolations of the gospel afford. To "*read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest*" such promises and doctrines as (Rom. v. 1.) "*Therefore being justified,*" &c.: (Rom. viii. 1. and 31.) "*There is therefore now no,*" &c. How full of sweet and unspeakable comfort ! How blessed are the eyes that see, how happy the hearts that can feel, rest upon, and realise the comfort, the truth, and the power of these inestimable truths !

Alas ! Alas ! of how much comfort and joy do we rob ourselves by unbelief ! Refusing to give credit to the blessed promises of the Lord—how often do we sin away our comforts by unlawful seeking of them in the world. We who ought to be the salt of the earth lose our savour. We who are sent into the world to be witnesses for Jesus, are ashamed of Him.

Thus the comforts of the gospel are lost. Holiness and consolation are wisely and necessarily joined together in the covenant of grace.

If you would walk happily you must also walk closely with Jesus ! It is indeed true that salvation

1. Acts iii. 20—21.

is sure to every Believing soul. This you may believe and hold; and yet the joy of it you may lose. "*Restore unto me* (said penitent David) *the joy of thy salvation.*"<sup>1</sup> He had lost it, though grace had not lost him. "*Great peace have they that love thy law.*"

If then you would enjoy the comforts of the gospel banquet, not only pray for a spiritual taste both to know and relish its joyful sound and the sweet fruits it furnishes its table with, but take heed that your garments are kept clean from the world's impure touch. Then like ancient Believers, you will walk both in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost.

The reason which the Church gives as an argument for the desired relief deserves notice—"for I am sick of love."

This was a spiritual sickness. There are various bodily sicknesses, so also various spiritual ones. There is the sickness of sin which is a sickness unto eternal death unless it be cured.

This is hereditary in every one of us! We brought it into the world.<sup>2</sup> It has grown with our growth, and waxed stronger with our strength.

It has spread its deadly poison over every faculty of man's soul, as well as every limb of his body. There is no part clean from it.

1. Ps. li. 12.

2 Ps. li. 5.

*“The whole head is sick and the whole heart faint, from the crown of the head even unto the sole of the foot;”*<sup>1</sup> sin has wrought in man’s nature.

If perchance some poor sin-sick soul has cast his or her eye upon this page, whose soul is sick and nigh unto death, oh, let me tell such an one “Behold! there is one, even Jesus, able and willing to save your life! Here is one—the only one—the great physician of Israel, whose balm of Gilead, compounded with His own most precious blood and tears, can give you health of soul!” Yes, poor worldling, you may be ignorant of that deadly disease, which like a consuming fever, is eating away the life of your soul. This only makes your case more pitiable. You may be seeking other remedies and other physicians. This is only aggravating your disease. You may be like the poor woman in the gospel, spending all your substance upon them, and yet be none the better, but rather the worse!

If thy sickness is to be cured, you must come to Jesus!

Alas! Alas! that dying, perishing sinners should sink down into the bottomless pit, with these words ringing in their ears, “*Ye will not come to me that ye might have life!*”

But this is not the sickness spoken of here. It is a sickness arising from a longing to enjoy more of the

1. Isa. i. 6.

presence of Jesus and the comfortable assurance of His gracious favour. I say longing to enjoy, because every child of God may enjoy the most comfortable assurance of Christ's presence and favour. And such as have tasted that the Lord is gracious, will be earnestly desirous of attaining to the most excellent joy and consolation which He can give.

This is implied in the language of this passage. The Church was "*sick of love*," and longed for the comfort which the assurance of having a vital interest in Christ, could only give. Many a Christian reader will probably read his or her own experience in that of the text!

At such times betake yourselves to Jesus. Come to Him again, simply as a thirsty, fainting sinner, waiting for fresh streams of His love and salvation!

Amidst all your weakness, buffetings and temptations, remember, if a good work has been, by the grace of God, commenced in your soul, it will also be perfected. God does not give and then take away. He does not begin and then discover that He can not carry out.

What He gives in the way of grace, He gives for eternity, as the apostle Paul also saith, "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance."<sup>1</sup>

When your soul is sick, when you see not your tokens, when your soul is cast down and

1. Rom. xi. 29.

fainteth within you, then ask "if God be for you, who can be against you?" He that spared not His own Son, but freely gave him up for us all, how shall He not with Him freely give us all things?<sup>1</sup>

Of the things which I have thus spoken this is the sum—that there are doctrines full of comfort, and truths full of peace and joy, set before us in the gospel, the enjoyment of which we should earnestly desire and unceasingly pray for.

And among the rich fruits which are there spread out, that of "assurance," is one of the most comforting and delicious to the child of God. "What (saith an old writer) can come amiss to him that hath the assurance that Jesus shed his blood for him, and God is his reconciled Father through the Son?"

"Hath he lost a friend? His friend lives. Hath he lost an only child? God hath given him his only son. Hath he scarcity of bread? God hath given him the finest of wheat—heavenly manna, the bread of life? Are his comforts taken from Him? The comforter is his which is the Holy Ghost. Doth he meet with storms and tempests of sorrow and trouble? He knows where to put in for harbour. God in Christ is his portion—heaven is his haven!"

Oh, I would to God, the professing church of God, understood and possessed this gift of the Holy

1. Rom viii. 32.

Ghost! It is one of the sweetest fruits of Christ's "banqueting house" we can enjoy upon earth! It is the very foretaste of heaven! "All saints shall enjoy heaven when they leave this earth: but some there are who enjoy heaven here on earth." You may indeed go to heaven without enjoying the fruits of this blessed doctrine. I dare not say otherwise. Many there are who have been disturbed with fears and doubts of their state, who yet, doubtless are Christ's. "Their's is saving faith though not rejoicing faith, even that faith which Christ pronounces to be great faith, which saith "*Lord I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof, but speak the word only and thy servant shall be healed.*"

"Blessed are all they that thus believe. It may seem little faith. But little faith goeth to heaven no less than great faith—not indeed so comfortably nor yet so gloriously. So then, he that hath faith, hath a blessing, but he that hath the full assurance of faith is more conscious of and rejoices in the blessing." The days of such are "the days of heaven upon earth." Covet earnestly then O Church of Christ the best gifts. Be not content with a day of small things. Press forward in the race. Visit oftimes the "banqueting house" of Jesus. Get strength, and refreshment, and encouragement thence. Behold the tables are spread. All things are prepared. Eat of friends, yea, drink, drink abundantly, O beloved.

If you would evermore feel the everlasting arms of Omnipotence round you and hear the voice of Jesus saying "*I am thy salvation*"—if you would be blessed in your day and generation as witnesses for Jesus in days of blasphemy, and hollow profession: if you would be known as bold, firm, unwavering disciples of Jesus—if you would be holy and spiritual in your feelings, and desires, and life, then seek for large supplies of the strengthening, comforting graces and gifts of "*Faith, Hope, and Charity, which are by Jesus Christ to the praise and glory of God.*"<sup>1</sup>

6. *His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me.*

7. *I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please.*

It is well remarked by an old writer concerning the figures employed in Holy Writ, that "*if they consent to go with us one mile, we must not compel them to go with us twain.*" The moral of which evidently is, that we are not at liberty to draw out the figures of Holy Scripture beyond due and legitimate bounds. Indeed, they sometimes so delicately shadow forth the truth they are intended to

1. Phil. i. 2.

exhibit, that to touch them, is to disfigure and destroy their use and beauty.

It is manifestly so in these verses, in which Christ in that mysterious union (which marriage typifies) acts the part of a tender and loving husband towards his Church. He sees her feeble and fainting, hears her cry for help, and in a moment is at her side, encircling her with the "everlasting arms," and discovering to her the strongest tokens of His love, having in His "left hand," temporal mercies, and in His "right hand," spiritual strength and consolations.

The Church is thus assured of her safety and security.

Sustained by His "left hand," and embraced by His "right hand," none can pluck her out of His hands.<sup>1</sup>

This is true of every age of the Church and concerning every member embraced within its fold. Jesus, the same "*yesterday, to-day, and for ever,*" "giveth power to the faint, and to them who have no might He increases strength."

Happy are the people who can thus make their boast in the Lord!

Reader! if ever your weary soul, cast down and fainting within you, has been stayed on the love and grace of Jesus Christ: if you have found Him a very present help in your time of trouble, if when tempted

1. Jno. x. 28.



He has succoured you: afflicted He has sympathised with you: when sick at heart He has healed your sickness; when weak supported; or fainting, revived you with the cordials of His love and grace, oh! then you have had some experience of the love of Jesus, who like a "good shepherd," both watches over his sheep Himself and charges your companions (who as yet understand not such close dealings of the Lord with the soul) not to suffer a single sound to break in upon the sleep of his timorous disciple, "so He giveth His beloved sleep."

8. *The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.*

In the previous verse the Believer was enjoying the very highest degree of spiritual privilege, calmly and securely reposing under His care, who keepeth His saints and neither sleepeth nor slumbereth.<sup>1</sup> The Church feared no evil and had rest. But so uncertain are the frames and feelings, even of the most spiritual, that lo! in this very next verse we find the presence of Jesus no longer enjoyed, but only expected.<sup>1</sup> Before, the Church had realised His presence and boasted of it in the presence of the daughters of Jerusalem. Here it is otherwise. He

1. Ps. cxx. 4.

was gone from her. We are not informed how, but somehow she has deprived herself of His presence.

She, who before time, was in the closest communion with her beloved, now sees Him in the far distance.

She hears his voice and recognises it. Like one of His own sheep, she knows his voice before she sees him, and easily distinguishes it from the voice of a stranger<sup>1</sup>. It rouses her soul from its too sound sleep, and rebukes her for her want of watchfulness. “*What could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation.*” Beware of resting either too much in sensible comfort, or of driving it away through careless estimation of them. Observe too that the transition from the highest spiritual communion with Christ and enjoyment of His favour to “the savouring of things that are of men,” is most easily and sometimes rapidly performed.

Who so favoured as Peter at the moment Jesus said “*Blessed art thou Simon Bar-jona?*” Who so wretched and miserable and self-degraded as that same Peter, when having denied His master thrice, self-condemned, he went out and wept bitter tears of shame and repentance?<sup>2</sup>

He presumed on the strength of his zeal. He was self-satisfied and confident in his privileges. He

1. John x. 4 & 5.

2. Mat. xxvi. 75.

ceased for a moment to watch and then fell into temptation and lost the peace and joy of salvation.

And the Church (which is the Lamb's bride) seems here to be in the same fallen condition.

At all events separated by many "mountains" and "hills." And this is most painful. For in His presence are joys for evermore, yea, "life itself!"

Who is there among the Lord's people, after having "once tasted" the power of Jesus' love and the gladness of His house and presence, that would be satisfied with a mere distant view of Him?

Even Zacchæus when he would see Jesus but could not because of the press of people, climbed up into a Sycamore tree that he might be near the Lord and behold His person.<sup>1</sup>

The woman that would be healed forced her way till she touched the very hem of His garments, and the moment she touched Him, she was made whole.<sup>2</sup>

All who have realised their own poverty and Christ's fulness, their own misery and the joy and peace which Christ's love imparts and His presence brings, stand on the watch and waits at the door-posts of His house to catch the first glimpse of returning mercies.

1. Luke xix. 4.

2. Mat. ix. 20.

*9. My beloved is like a roe or a young hart : behold,  
he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth  
at the windows, shewing himself  
through the lattice.*

In the former verse the Church first heard His voice and then saw Him coming towards her. Here in this she observes nearer approaches of the Lord.—

(I.) He stood behind the wall :

(II.) He looked forth at the windows :

(III.) He shewed Himself through the lattices :

We may understand by the wall, “ the Ceremonial Law,”<sup>1</sup> even the law of Commandments contained in Ordinances. Behind this wall of types, figures, and sacrifices, Christ shewed himself to the Church, though dimly and obscurely.

Under the dispensation of Moses and the prophets, Christ stood behind the wall of carnal ordinances, ceremonies, and sacrifices “ imposed on Israel until the time of reformation.”<sup>2</sup> These were but the “ shadow of good things to come.” When Christ came in the flesh, then the shadow fled away, and the wall was broken down. He came and realised every type, fulfilled prophecy, and made an end of sacrifices. He came as the light of the morning when the sun “ riseth, even a morning without

1. Eph. ii, 4—15.      2. Heb. ix. 10.

clouds.” He came the desire of many prophets and kings—the hope of all the nations of the earth and the expectation of the everlasting hills!

*“Bless the Lord God of Israel, through whose tender mercies the day spring from on high hath visited us.”*

Abraham, and Isaac, and Moses, and all the Prophets, and all old Testament Saints, longed to see the wall broken down, and the day break, and the sun of righteousness arise.

They only saw Him behind the wall. They only beheld Him dimly shadowed forth in the ordinances and types which Moses was admonished of God to ordain, when he made the tabernacle according to the pattern shewed him in the mount.

Scripture has determined what these shadows meant.<sup>1</sup> Jesus is the reality. He is the body. He is the substance of which these types or ordinances of Israel were the shadows.

Take away their reference to Him, and they cease to have meaning.

But look at them as pictures of all that Jesus was to do and suffer in the flesh, and they breathe with life and significance.

So that as the great Reformer Tindal saith, “while there is a “star light of Christ” in all the ceremonies, there is in some so truly the light of the

1. Col. ii. 17.      2. Heb. x. 1.

broad-day, "that he cannot but believe God shewed Moses the secrets of Christ and the very manner of his death, even in the wilderness."

Just look for a moment at the chief part of the Temple service, and well might one great divine say of that Book, that it was "the gospel according to Leviticus." It is full of the gospel. It is full of Christ. The Israelite could discern Him, even though He seemed to be only standing behind the wall and shewing Himself here and there through the windows and lattices, the different ordinances and ceremonies which served (like windows do in a house) to give light to the souls of them that worshipped. But in what did the Temple Service chiefly consist?—The morning and evening sacrifice: the Lamb without blemish: the Goat that was slain: the Bullock that was offered: the scape-goat sent forth into the wilderness: all testified of Jesus.

The roasting of the pascal lamb with fires, eating it with bitter herbs, these set forth the agony and bloody sweat and Cross and passion of Jesus when He bore our sins; when He, the true pascal lamb, Christ our passover was slain, and endured for us the fires of His Father's wrath.

The Temple too was a type of Jesus. Every part of its furniture a type and figure of what was to be in the humanity of the Incarnate God. Before the entrance of the Holy place stood the altar of brass

which points to pardon and sin through Christ's sacrifice: the laver filled with water, the emblem of the Holy Spirit to sanctify and make meet for their house above, such as believe. On the one side of the place stood the Holy candlestick with its lamps always burning, typical of the Divine light which came into the world.<sup>1</sup> On the other side-table, shew-bread.<sup>2</sup>

At the Upper end of the Holy place stood an altar of incense. From that altar rose up the smoke of incense, the fragrance of which was drawn out by fire. This is also a type of the sweet savour in God's sight of Christ's sufferings, and of acceptance in the Father through the beloved. And last of all the Holy of Holies.<sup>3</sup>

Thus was Christ seen though as it were, "*behind the wall*:" through the "*windows and lattices*:" the ordinances and places of offering: thus was He seen by the pious believing Jew under the Ceremonial Law.

Thus was the gospel preached and Christ set forth amid the solemn but simple types of the Church in the wilderness. The Old Testament teaches the same doctrine respecting a sinner's salvation, as the New!

They preach one Gospel, one Saviour, one Faith, "Both in the Old and New Testament everlasting life is offered through Jesus Christ."

1. Jno. i. 9.      2. Jno. vi. 35.      3. Heb. ix. 78-9.

The sacrifices and ceremonies of the Old Testament preach Jesus Christ crucified, as well as the Sacraments and ministry of the New.

The New is the fulfilment of the Old ; the anti-type of the type.

There are some among us who, instead of using the Old Testament to establish the doctrines of the New, cast them on one side as if needless !

This is to treat with contempt God's word. Our blessed Lord himself quoted the Old Testament as God's word repeatedly.

Study then the Old Testament in the light of the New—especially such Books as that of Leviticus and this Song, and Christ will be seen manifested: shewing himself from behind the “ wall ” of partition (now broken down) “ flourishing at the windows,” “ shewing himself from the lattices.”

There is, however, a further sense in which the words of this verse are strictly applicable to ourselves, to the Church of Christ generally, and to individual Believers in particular. To the Church, the glory of Christ is still hidden. He shews Himself to her only through the ministries of His Word and Sacraments. In them He manifests His love and the riches of His grace. But still the Church can only see Him as through a glass darkly. The body is as a wall between Him and His people. But soon this will be done away, and all with open



face will see Jesus as He is, and stand in His immediate presence. To the Believer, Christ's favour and presence are oftentimes hidden. They can not find Him, nor trace His steps. But why? Who has hindered His approach? What is the barrier which is an obstacle to His presence? "He standeth behind *our wall*"—a wall of *our own* raising—an obstacle of *our own* building.

We place ourselves where we may please ourselves and gratify our own wills, but exclude Christ and even block up the entrances. This is the cause of Christ's distance.—"*Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear:—But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.*"<sup>1</sup>

We may not be positively guilty of sins of an aggravated form. They may be only such as many would term little inconsistencies, allowable associations of persons, places and pursuits, which though not positively forbidden, are of the "*earth, earthy,*" and so far the sure causes and forerunners of estrangement from Christ. Be not deceived. The nearer you live to the world, the further you are from Christ.

"*What manner of persons then ought ye to be*

*in all holy conversation and godliness*"<sup>1</sup>—lest ye grieve the Lord so that He hide Himself behind the "*wall*"!

How diligently, how carefully, how circumspectly should you walk, that when He comes, riding on the wings of the wind in His glory and the glory of His Father, you may be "found of Him in peace without spot and blameless."

"A little while" and He shall come  
Forth from the inner shrine,  
And call His ransomed people Home,  
To bliss supreme, divine!

10. *My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.*

11. *For, lo! the winter is past, the rain is over and gone;*

12. *The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land;*

13. *The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grapes gave a good smell.  
Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.*

This is the voice of the Church telling to her daughters and companions what gracious things Jesus

1. II. Pet. iii. 11.

had said to her. When Christ speaks effectually to the soul it can never forget His gracious words. She calls Christ her "beloved," and He calls her His "love," and His "fair one." All this is a great mystery and can only be understood by such as are exercised therein. This is certain, those whom Christ puts his love upon are "fair" in His eyes, however uncomely in the eyes of others. He repeats His invitation to the Church. This shews great and blameable indifference on her part, as well as great love and earnestness on His. He urges compliance with His wishes by reasons very elegantly described under the figure of returning spring. "*The winter is past*"; that time of deadness, and cold, and barrenness. "*The rains*"—the cold harsh rain of winter is ceased and "the dew is as the dew of herbs." "*The flowers appear*," and the voice of singing birds and the gentle moans of the turtle dove testify like the "leaves" of the fig trees, and the sweet smell sent forth by the tender "*grapes*"—that the pleasant season of spring was come.

All which description is allegorical and is applicable in a prophetic point of view, to that glorious millennial period, whose dawn seems already bursting on this groaning weary earth, when the "wilderness and solitary places shall be glad and the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose."<sup>1</sup> "It shall blossom abund-

1. Is. xxxv. 1.

antly and rejoice with joy and singing." "The glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon."<sup>1</sup>

Or else it is descriptive of the condition of the Church of God before Christ's coming in flesh. Those were wicked, dreary, rainy winter-times, "*when darkness covered the land, and gross darkness the people.*"<sup>2</sup>

But when Jesus came, of whom prophets and patriarchs had spoken—gospel light and warmth diffused itself and scattered abroad the shades of darkness, infidelity, and superstition.

Gospel grace, with its warming life-giving power, softened the frozen, stone-cold hearts of men, and the stern warrior wept, and the proud king trembled when the story of grace was told them by the witnesses of Christ and His resurrection. The winter of the world was past, and a glorious spring-time of the gospel kingdom (according to the election of grace) burst over the whole earth.

We have also a lively description of the flourishing condition of those who have passed from death unto life; who are no longer under the chilling, freezing, deadening influence of nature, but in the full exercise of the grace of Jesus Christ. "*The flowers appear on the Earth.*" These are "the graces" of the spirit, faith, hope, love, meekness, temperance,

1. Is. xxxv. 2.

2. Is. lx. 2.

long-suffering, and forbearance.<sup>1</sup> These adorn a Believer's profession, as the flowers adorn the renewed earth. But they are of God's raising.<sup>2</sup>

The graces of the Believer are flowers very pleasing to behold, but they are of the spirit's production, not man's; "*not of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God.*"

"*The time of the singing of birds is come.*"—Like the birds in spring-time, sitting and "singing among the branches," the renewed regenerated man, praises his Redeemer God, "*in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in his heart unto the Lord.*"<sup>3</sup>

"*Unto thee O Lord I will give thanks, yea, unto thee will I give thanks,*" is the key-note of the song which every ransomed soul may well sing.

The time speeds quickly on, when all who have sung the Lord's song in the strange land and "hung their harps on the willow," shall "stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God, and sing the song of Moses and the Lamb."<sup>4</sup> "Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty—just and true Thy ways thou King of saints."

"*The voice of the turtle is heard in their land.*" According to (Ps. lxxiv. 19.), this is the voice of the Church.

1. Gal. v. 22.

2. Ps. civ. 30.

3. Eph. v. 19.

4. Rev. xv. 2.

*The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell."*

The saints of God abound in good works; are laden with rich and good fruit: like the fig tree, which in Egypt was wont to bear fruit seven times a year in the greatest luxuriance and plenty; and like the vine, which not only produces abundant crops of fruit, but also when in flower, "*gives a good smell.*"

The graces of the Church are pleasing to God as being produced by the constraining love of Christ, and when presented in His name, they are fragrant to God. They "smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia." One thing here observe, the figs are only "*green,*" and the grapes but—"tender." They are not yet "perfect," nor even have they "attained" any degree of perfection, but yet they are noticed, and that with evident delight by the Lord of the vineyard.

To all His dear children the voice of Jesus comes in tender rebuke, yet in love. "*Arise and come away.*"

He would have us more active in His service.

He bids us "*rise up.*" It may have been long since the winter-time of our soul has passed away. It was a sleep of death in which we then lay.

In that sense we shall sleep no more. He who then aroused us will keep us awake until He comes. But oftentimes we seem to fall asleep, forgetful that

*"the night is far spent, and the day is at hand."*<sup>1</sup>

In this condition the garden of our soul but little resembles the garden of the Lord, but rather that of the slothful man.<sup>2</sup>

Faith is feeble; love to Jesus well-nigh frozen up; duties are lifelessly performed, and in a legal spirit; life frittered away in doing little or nothing for the glory of our Master; prayer not altogether omitted but offered only in a lifeless formal manner.

In mercy, Christ speaks either by Providence or His Word—"rise up," why sleep ye? Could ye not watch with me one hour? Rise up and follow me.

He may touch us slightly at first as the angel did Elijah under the juniper tree. He may speak words of love and tenderness. Should all this fail to arouse His slothful disciple, He will smite sorely until the very soul of the sleeper is stricken through as with a thousand arrows. Church of Christ "*rise up*" and come away from among the sons of Belial, and follow the Lamb whither he goeth!

Quit your pleasures, ease, and comfort, and follow Him who followed and bore the Cross for you. "*Rise up*" and follow Him in newness of life. Pray as if you had never prayed before. "*Rise up*" and "*come away*" from the tents of Mesech, in which for a while you are constrained to dwell.

1. Rom. xiii. 12.

2. Prov. xxiv. 30.

This is not your life, but you look for a blessed one and more perfect in the glorious appearing and coming of your Lord !

This is a dying world. It is a cursed earth, and it groans deep and loud for redemption. "*Rise up*" from it—get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, unto that goodly land which Jesus beckons you toward.

You are pilgrims and strangers on earth, as all your fathers were. Why then seek a home and treasures here, when the cloud of God's wrath hangs over ready to dissolve in fervent heat this earth and all things that are therein? Its very splendour is perilous and its beauty decay !

As friends and brethren of Jesus—members of the household of faith—inheritors of a royal crown, I bid you "*rise up*" and "*come away*."

"*Rise up*" to a swifter race; to a closer conformity to His image. "*Come away*" and lust not after the fellowship of the world, its pomps, or its vanities. "*Arise my love, my fair one, and come away !*"



14. *O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice: for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.*

“*O my dove.*”—This is a new name which Christ is pleased to give to His Church. It is not inappropriate for many reasons.

(I.) The dove is a very fair and beautiful bird.<sup>1</sup> So also is Christ's Church.

(II.) The dove is also a most gentle, innocent, and harmless creature. Therefore Christ says to His Church—(Matt. x. 16.) His disciples are to be, and should strive and pray to be “blameless and harmless the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation.”<sup>2</sup> They are to live not only inoffensively before the world, but peacefully and quietly also among themselves.

(III.) The dove is a very fearful and timid bird. Ephraim is compared to a trembling dove.<sup>3</sup> The penitence of Israel after its return under Ezra from Babylon is noted—“*all the people sat in the street of the house of God trembling.*”<sup>4</sup>

It is the sign of a tender, conscience, and humble

1. Ps. lxxiii. 113.

2. Ep. v. 27.

3. Hos. xii. 2.

4. Ezra x. 9.

spirit, and to such is the promise (of Christ's dwelling with them) given. *"To this man will I look even him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and trembleth at my own word."*<sup>1</sup>

For these and other reasons this title is very appropriately given by Christ to His Church. She is His Church—"Christ's dove." No wonder therefore she can find like Noah's dove, no resting place on earth. Her dwelling place is "*in the clefts of the rock, and in the secret places of the stairs.*"

This may be understood either as alluding to the usual place where the dove makes its nest, of which Jeremiah speaks: or, as to a place of refuge to which the dove flies when pursued by a bird of prey, "into the hollow of a rock."

This rock may refer to God's electing love, in which the Church has dwelt and will dwell unto all eternity. Its foundations are upon the everlasting hills, sure and certain, being laid altogether in the sovereign will and pleasure of that God who "will have mercy on whom will have mercy," and "be gracious to whom will be gracious;"<sup>2</sup> whose purposes cannot fail, and whose counsel cannot be disannulled.

Now as this doctrine is to some a rock of great consolation, "full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort," (Act. xvii.) "confirming their faith and kindling their love:" so also it is a rock of

1. Is. lxvi. 2.

2. Rom. ix. 18.

where a stone is not moving which they cannot move because they cannot read it, as they think, in the true text and print of Holy Scripture: while in the twisted and various human minds, it proves to be a most ingenious idolatry,<sup>1</sup> a stone, upon which if any fall, they are bruised, but which if it falls on them it crusheth them in powder.

But comparing Scripture with Scripture, we shall rather find that this figure "rock" is continually used for Christ himself.

(One of the most striking texts is, that (1. Cor. x. 4.)

The apostle speaking of Christ, compares Him to that rock in the wilderness which Moses smote with his rod, and waters gushed out, and the streams followed them through the wilderness. — "They drank," &c. &c.

So again (Matt. xvi. 18.) where referring to the noble confession of faith which Peter had just made upon "*this rock*."—I build my Church i.e. on this confession of faith in me as "*very God of very God*," the true Messiah.

The clefts of the rock are the wounds of Jesus, who "was wounded for our iniquities, and bruised for our transgressions."<sup>1</sup>

Hiding ourselves there we have a sure and safe refuge from the claims of divine justice and the reprobation of a wounded and accusing conscience.

1. Is. liii. 5.

This God prefigured to Moses when He put him "*in the cleft of a rock*," and made all His glory pass before him.<sup>1</sup>

For where can we behold so fully the glory of God's mercy and the severity of God's holiness, as in the pierced hands and lacerated body of Jesus?

It is by the Cross of Christ—seeing Him pierced and cleft by the nails and spear, that we see the awful love of God, as well for the Church as for His own glory.

So many of you as believe, have fled to Him in very truth and reality.

In Him you have everlasting security and perfect peace.

*"There is now no condemnation for them that are in Christ Jesus."*<sup>2</sup>

In Him you have an ever present intercessor,<sup>3</sup> to whom you may go with your daily sorrows and hourly sins, asking strength to bear one, and grace to crucify the other.

The "*secret places of stairs*" which the Septuagint translates "*the shadow of the rock*,"<sup>4</sup> simply mean "steep mountain, passes, or precipices, which can only be ascended by stairs or steps."

And what can these steep places be but Christ, the high rock of His Church's salvation? He is

1. Exod. xxxiii. 22. 2. Rom. viii. 1. 3. Heb. vii. 25.

4. Isaiah xxxii. 2.

that ladder which Jacob beheld in his vision, which reached from Heaven to earth.<sup>1</sup>

He being God and man, has reconciled God to man, and brought Heaven and earth together and made a way of access to God the Father.

*"Let me see thy countenance; let me hear thy voice."*

Christ desires to hear the voice of His Church. Redeemed sinners ought not to hold their peace. It is the time of "the singing of birds for them." They may well rejoice like the woman<sup>2</sup> who found her lost piece of silver, like the father over his prodigal son, like the man who had found the stray sheep in the wilderness. There are times indeed when we are to be silent. *"I was dumb (said David in his affliction) and opened not my mouth, because thou didst it."*<sup>3</sup>

That was a laudable silence. David complains not, though he could have done so, for he was suffering wrongfully. His son Absalom was in open rebellion, and his nearest friends had conducted themselves most basely towards him, so maliciously were they set against Him. Yet he resolves to be silent. He will not speak lest he should murmur and thereby sin. *"I was dumb, &c."* But as there is time for silence, so also a time to speak, and tell of the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.

Jesus calls to his saints—"Let me hear thy

1. Gen. xxviii. 10-15. 2. Luke xv. 24. 3. Psalm xxxix. 9.

voice." Speak of, and for, and to Christ. "Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh." "That which is uppermost in man's thoughts is always at the tip of his tongue." As Andrew told Phillip, "I have found the Messiah"<sup>1</sup>—as Moses told Hobab, "We are journeying to the place,"<sup>2</sup> so Christ would have Believers tell their neighbours and acquaintances of the glory of His Kingdom: and the fulness of His salvation: and the efficacy of His blood: and the sufficiency of His grace: and His sure and certain coming again to receive His people to Himself and restore all things.

Speak for Christ.—It is as true now as when Paul dwelt in the hired house at Rome, that Christ in his doctrines is "a sect every where spoken against."<sup>3</sup> We are therefore to speak for Him and not be ashamed of His reproach

Though we can serve Him only most unworthily, yet still let it be boldly. Let us bear our testimony for Him both in pure doctrine and consistent and holy walk. Above all Christ would have his Church speak to him.

If you are to speak of, and for, you must get grace and power to do so from Jesus. For this you must ask and speak to Him. Let Him hear your voice therefore betimes.

In secret prayer, in family prayer, in social prayer,

1. Jno. i. 40.      2. Nun. x. 29.      3. Acts xxviii. 22.

and in the public assembly, Christ loves to hear his people speak to him. He encourages them, saying, "sweet is thy voice."

We are told<sup>1</sup> "they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, &c." And of what did they speak? Of the consolation of Israel, of the excellency of Christ, and his work and grace. And how sweet, how acceptable their voices were! "*the Lord hearkened, &c. &c.*"

But the voice of the Church is most sweet when it speaks to Christ. The voice of prayer, though uttered in broken accents, is like music in His ears. He loves to hear it. Nothing is so delightful to Him. So also is the voice of praise and thanksgiving. It pleases the Lord better than "an ox or a bullock that has horns and hoofs," (*i. e.* than bodily and material sacrifices and offerings).

15. *Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines : for our vines have tender grapes.*

The Lord here bids His Church take "*the little foxes,*" "the secret faults, and besetting sins," which, "through the infection of nature do remain, even in them that are regenerate."<sup>2</sup>

Those "dead flies"<sup>3</sup> which cause the oint-

1. Mal. iii. 16.    2. ix. Article    3. Ecc. x. 1.

ment to send forth an unsavory smell, correspond to the "*little foxes*" which so often eat and destroy the tender fruit of many a promising vine in Christ's garden, which is His Church. "*Little*" as they are, they have a power to weaken, even to destroy for awhile the peace and fruitfulness of the Christian's character and usefulness. They are all the more difficult to see and take, both because they are crafty like the "fox," and being "*little*" are not thought likely to do much harm or damage. They are not "sins" in the strict sense of the word: for if so, they could not be called "*little*." No sin can be little in God's sight, because sin is the "transgression of the law."<sup>1</sup>

But there may be, and there are little infirmities, little inconsistencies, little deficiencies of character; which, like "*little foxes*" secretly consume the ripening, but "*tender*" grapes—those fruits of righteousness which are to the praise and glory of God.

The "power of littles," either to mar or increase the beauty of Holiness, to "sweeten daily life, or be a perpetual source of discomfort and annoyance cannot be over-rated."

The Lord despises neither the day of "small things," nor is unobservant of "*little foxes*," which if not taken as "*little*," soon will over-run the vine-

1. Jno. i. 3—4.



yard, and by craft and subtlety destroy the fruit both by gnawing the bark off the branches and devouring the tender grapes.

“What are the “*little foxes*” which the Christian of the present day need watch for, that he may “*take*?” What crafty “*little foxes*” destroying the fruits of grace—“gentleness, meekness, and patience,” are the daily every-day little cares of life! The loss of some small comforts that we are accustomed to, the vexations and annoyances which the thoughtlessness of a friend, or the blundering of a servant, or the forgetfulness of some one upon whom we are depending, how provoking are these “*little*,” things to the disturbing of that “quiet spirit” which is so characteristic of the gospel, and and in “God’s sight of so great a price!” These things “*little*” and contemptible as they really are, how often do they excite the angry feelings and provoke us to speak “unadvisedly with our lips!” How do they deaden the soul to prayer, distract the thoughts, and create a restless, dissatisfied spirit! Concerning these Jesus says—“*Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the tender grapes.*”

So again, like “*little foxes*,” we see and feel how injurious to our own and others’ spiritual prosperity, is that evil habit of “procrastination,” which is so akin to “idleness;” that “quiet and dull frittering away of time,” “unprofitable small talk, idle

reading, vain, profitless sauntering and visiting about from house to house;" which not only negative the apostolic injunction "redeem the time," but encourages such a weak and unenergetic frame of mind, which either luxuriates in doing nothing that is worth doing, or produces a restless insatiable craving after religious excitement, which can only be gratified at the expence of all sober, practical, godliness.

So again, what a tribe of "*little foxes*," are thoughtlessness, self-pleasing, little debts, careless expenditure, extravagant dressing, sulky temper, snappish voice and gruff manners, sneering looks, carping words, constant fault-finding and depreciation of other's impatience, refusal to bear with other's peculiarities, readiness to take offence, critical fault-finding censoriousness, (which certainly makes persons most unamiable), and the ill-natured habit of making a jest of a neighbour's failings:—these and many others which time would fail to enumerate, are so many little, sly, "*foxes*," which weaken the Christian life, eat out Christian consistency, destroy and devour the "*tender grapes*," and so rob Christ of that fruit of holy love, which are well-pleasing to the Father through Him. Therefore He charges you, professing Church of God, "take these foxes," these "*little foxes*." Take them while little—take them in their beginnings. If you do not thrust

back their heads, (the first suggestions of evil), they will imperceptibly make their way with their whole body into the most secret recesses of your "heart."

"If you desire safety, you must resist temptation in the bud, (*i. e.* take the fox while "*little*." ) If you suffer the bud to blow and blossom, it will grow, till it bear fruit more bitter than the fruit of Sodom."

16. *My beloved is mine, and I am his, he feedeth among the lilies.*

Saint Paul, addressing the Church of God at Corinth, and enumerating their high and lofty privileges, that all things were theirs, whether apostles, ministers, the world, life, death, things present or things to come, reaches the climax in these exalted words:—"Ye are Christ's," and "Christ is God."<sup>1</sup>

So the Church here:—"I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine."

"Mine," by the gift of the Father;<sup>2</sup> my purchase; mine by actual and real possession. "I am His"—by the gift of the Father in the eternal covenant of grace: by actual purchase; by occupation through the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. "He feedeth among the lilies," *i. e.* among His Churches which are His gardens, which are filled with Believing souls, which in His sight are as lilies!

1. I. Cor. iii. 22—23.

1. Jno. x. 29.

Christ and His Church have mutual interest in each other. "*My beloved is mine, and I am His.*"

Notice the (I) grounds of this fellowship: (II) the nature of it: (III) the results of it.

(I.) The grounds of this holy fellowship:—" *My Beloved is mine.*" So David, "*Thou art my God,*" and Thomas "*My Lord my God.*"

The Church first asserts her interest in Christ, and then His interest in her. Christ thus manifests His love to the sinner's soul. He gives Himself to us first, and thus constrains us to give up ourselves<sup>1</sup> to Him. But how can the Church say of Christ, "*My beloved is mine.*" He is so by the gift of the Father.

Christ calls himself, "the gift of God."<sup>2</sup> Every good and perfect gift is from the Father of lights, but Christ is the greatest, choicest gift—"the gift" by way of eminence; the best, the most comprehensive gift which includes all others in it. He that gives the lesser, will assuredly also give the greater. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall He not with him also freely give us all things?"<sup>3</sup>

"*Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift.*"

Again, He is "*mine*" saith the Church, by His own gift. "He gave Himself, (says Paul to the Ephesians), for the Church."<sup>4</sup>

1. John iii. 16.

2. John iv. 10.

3. Rom. viii.

4. Eph. v. 25.

And again,<sup>1</sup> "who gave Himself for our sins that He might deliver us from this present evil world."

And again, "*I lay down my life for the sheep.*"<sup>2</sup> "No man taketh it from me." "I have power to lay it down, and power to take it up again."

Again, "*He is mine,*" saith the Church by actual possession. That which a man is possessed of, we may certainly call our own. The soul that is conscious of an interest in Jesus' salvation, having obtained forgiveness and acceptance with God the Father, assuredly knows and feels this.

It can say with no unmeaning assurance, "*My Beloved is mine.*" "Christ loved me, and died for me." "O God, thou art my God." It is a very easy matter to point the finger of scorn at such "pretensions," and ridicule them as the offsprings of spiritual pride and incurable presumption.

But if they are pretensions, who would not be a pretender with the sublime Psalmist, and the martyred Apostle Paul?

"*I am His.*"—"His" by the gift of God the Father. "He that gives Christ to us, also gives us to Christ."

"Thine they were," (said Jesus in that memorable prayer, just before his decease at Jerusalem), and thou gavest them me."

And again,<sup>3</sup> "*Holy Father keep through,*" &c.

1. Gal. i. 4.

2. John x. 15.

3. John xvii. 11.

Look at the fulness and certainty of these words of Jesus! Here is hope and strong consolation for those that have fled to Him for refuge. Christ speaks of His believing people as the precious gift of God.

“Thou gavest them to me,” out of Thine own most rich, and free, and unmerited love!”

“They are my flock.”—“I lay down my life for them.” “They shall hear my voice, and I will guide them all to glory.”

“They are my bride whom I must clothe in the garments of righteousness, whose debts I must cancel, and for whom I must and will provide.”

They are my subjects, “made willing in the day of my power,” in whom, and over whom, I must reign. I have made them kings and priests unto God, and they shall reign with me for ever and ever!”

Beloved, can you realise these blessed truths? They are truths revealed by Jesus himself. Oh that we each knew them experimentally, and did live upon them day by day!

Ah! if we did really believe these glorious truths and realise our standing, calling and profession, how insignificant every thing would appear in comparison with our souls' high privileges, and noble destinies!

How calmly should we endure all things, seeing Him who is invisible; knowing that our life is hid

with Him, and that when he shall appear, we shall be like Him and behold His glory !<sup>1</sup>

Again, as we are His by actual gift from the Father, so are we His by actual purchase on His part. Salvation through Christ is freely offered without money and without price. But it was purchased at a priceless cost. He bought us with His own blood. He gave His own life a ransom for ours.

Furthermore Believers are His by their own surrender of themselves to Him. All that come to Him are drawn by the Spirit who makes them "willing in the day of His power." Yet they are so drawn and influenced by the Spirit as to make a voluntary surrender of themselves to Jesus. "*One shall say, I am the Lord's : and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob ; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the God of Israel.*"<sup>2</sup>

This in New Testament language is called giving themselves to the Lord. Such are the grounds of fellowship between the Believer and Christ.

(II) Look at the nature of it.—"*My Beloved is mine, and I am His.*" How close is the union between Christ and His Church. They are one.

This union is personal, "I in them." "Because

1. I. Jno. iii. 1—3.

2. Is. xlv. 5.

I live, ye shall live also." When Saul persecuted the Church at Jerusalem and Damascus, see how Christ identifies Himself with it—" *I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.*"

He puts Himself for the Church as the husband would for his wife. If the wife be injured or insulted the husband feels the injury or insult as done to Himself.

" *Know ye not, &c.*"<sup>1</sup>—" We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones."

This union is real! He is the vine, we the branches! As the branch receives life by the sap which flows through the whole tree from the trunk and root of the tree, so the Church and every Believer has life by union with Christ. The moment that union ceases that same moment spiritual life decays and perishes.

If a man abide not in Jesus, as a branch does in the vine, he is cast forth and is withered and fit only to be burned.

So long as there is life in the head, there is life in all the members of the body.

This union is mysterious. The Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity, is without controversy, a great mystery.

Next after this comes the union of Christ and Believers which Saint Paul having spoken of,<sup>2</sup> says

1. Cor. vi. 15.

2. Eph. v. 32.



"This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church."

This union is an indissoluble union. It is a bond never to be severed.

But what is the bond of this union?

Christ's "everlasting love"—"I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and with loving kindness drawn thee."<sup>1</sup>

This Believer, is the Heavenly cement which knits so closely and securely Christ and his redeemed people.

What was it that knit David and Jonathan and made them as if they had been but one soul? They loved each other as their own souls. Their love is but a faint type of Christ's for his Church.

Who can separate the Believer from the love of Christ?<sup>2</sup> If Christ be your's, then it follows that all that Christ hath, is your's also. All His perfections and attributes are your's—i. e. you have the benefit and the comfort of them. They are all engaged in your behalf in bringing you to glory.

Is He Almighty? Then "*He is able to keep you from falling, and present you faultless before the throne of God.*"

Is He Omnipresent? Then you can enjoy His presence at all times, and in all places. He is always at your right hand, and if you set Him

1. Jer. xxxi. 3. 2. Rom. viii. 35, 39. 3. Jude, verse 24.

always before you and realise His constant presence, ("thou Lord seest me,") you shall never be moved.

Is He Omniscient? Then He knows all your wants, and fears, and doubts, and trials, and enemies. He is the comforter "who can give songs in the night."

"*Is He the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever?*" then you need not fear any alteration of His love, or change of affection.

All that He has is your's. In Him all fulness dwells, and from Him all fulness of blessing, and pardon, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, comes forth. His precious blood is your's to cleanse and atone for your guilt. His perfect righteousness is your's to justify you before the Holy God, and an assembled universe of men and angels. His kingdom of glory, the tree of life, the hidden manna, the white stone, and in it the new name written—*the raiment of fine linen clean and white: the crown of life: and the harps of God: the throne of Christ: and an everlasting home in God's house;* these and more than these which the ear of man hath never heard of, and upon which the eye of flesh could not gaze, all these are your's if ye are Christ's, for Christ is God. Believest thou these things? Then live accordingly. "You cannot feel (do you say) so sure!" Why not? Is it because you want to do "some great thing," to recom-

ment yourself to God, and make you feel more acceptable? What unbelief? What self-righteousness? You hesitate to accept a full Christ; a glorious Christ; an omnipotent, omniscient and ever-living Saviour.

There can be no question, from this passage, and others from St. Paul's epistles, that such a thing is attainable, as an assurance of knowing our interest in Christ Jesus, and all the promises and blessings of the covenant of grace.

Unpardonable is the mercy of having any interest in Christ's blood—much more so to know and feel it, and be capable of saying, with Thomas, "*My Lord and my God,*"<sup>1</sup> and with Job, "*I know that my Redeemer liveth,*"<sup>2</sup> or with St. Paul, "*I am now ready to be offered, and the time of departure is at hand.*" "*I have fought the good fight; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which God the righteous judge shall give me at that day,*"<sup>3</sup> or with the Church in my text, "*I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine!*"

If you are Christ's then, it follows you are not your own but His, being bought with a great price. You are members of His body. Think of this every day. When temptation to sin presents itself remember your oneness with Christ. How can I do this wickedness and wound my Head and Master?

1. Jno. xi. 28.    2. Job. xix. 25.    3. II. Tim. iv. 8.

Set this continually before you: is it consistent with my oneness with Christ? Shall I promote hereby His glory? You are not Satan's, Christ has delivered you out of his hands. Obey not then Satan's temptations. Resist his motions to evil. You are not the world's. The world hates Christ—it crucified Him, and in reality sets Him at defiance and tramples His blood beneath its feet. Love not the world therefore. Serve it not, for Christ has chosen you out of it to be a peculiar people, for His own glory.

17. *Until the day break, and the shadows flee away,  
turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a  
young hart upon the mountains of Bether.*

It does not appear, at first sight, whether these words stand connected with the former verse. Some think they are, and would read them thus: "*My Beloved is mine, and I am his, until the day break, and the shadows flee away.*"

Thus, the sense of the whole passage would amount to this: "as long as day and night continue, and God's covenant stands sure, so long my covenant interest in, and union to Christ (who is my Beloved) will abide unshaken. I can no more be separated from His love than day and night cease."

But according to our version it is evident from



as it is written,<sup>1</sup> "thine own wickedness shall correct thee?"

But what encouragement is there for prayer!  
"Turn again O Lord and forsake me not utterly."

Mourn and pray for His return. Plead His own promises. Remember that sooner may Heaven and earth pass away, than the promises of God in Christ Jesus, fail to be fulfilled to the last jot and tittle.

If you are of the number of Christ's flock and know His voice and follow Him, He will not forsake you utterly, neither turn aside for ever. David was forsaken, but not like Saul. Peter was forsaken, but not as Judas.

The Church in our text is forsaken, but not utterly, for she tells us<sup>2</sup> that though she wandered about the "streets and in the broad ways," (seeking her Beloved), "it was but a little," and she found Him whom her soul loved.

"Be thou like unto a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether." May thy return be as swift as the running of the roe and young hart! The Believer is most impatient of Christ's absence. The "*Mountains of Bether*," or more literally "mountains of separation or division," may refer either (I) to Christ's first coming in the flesh, when He abolished all the ceremonial law of Moses which had been a wall of separation between Jew and Gentile,

1. Jer. xi. 19.

2. Chap. iii. 4.

and in that sense mountains of division, or (II) to Christ's spiritual coming to a Believer's soul, which until grace opens the door, is separated from God by walls of wickedness and "*mountains of Bether*:" or (III) to Christ's second coming when He shall descend with the voice of the archangel and trump of God, making those clouds His chariot which are now like mountains of division between earth and Heaven, and separate the Church militant on earth from Christ triumphant in glory.<sup>1</sup>

I think we can only fully interpret the text, and adopt its language as our own in the last sense—that second glorious appearing and coming of the Lord to perfect the redemption of His people: to receive to Himself His own kingdom, and execute the judgement committed into His hands by His Father.<sup>2</sup>

It is to this glorious event for which the Church has so long prayed "*Come Lord Jesus, come quickly*."<sup>3</sup> The Church now may take up the language of this text, as the Church of old did, in reference to Christ's first coming, and say—" *Until the day break,*" &c.

Can we each take up this language before our Lord and Master and use it with the fervent sincerity of the faithful in the text?

What do we think of Christ? Is He our Beloved?

1. Thea. iv. 16.    2. Jno. v. 22.    3. Rev. xxii. 20.

Have we found Him to be the pearl of great price? the balm of Gilead for the wounded conscience? the good Samaritan, who, finding us among thieves, stripped and bruised, and wounded, bound up our wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and provided for our future sustenance?

Can we say of Him "this is my Beloved, and this is my Friend?" Then like the Church in the text, we may indeed pray "*Until the day break, &c.*"

Let God's dear children then take up this prayer, especially in a day when holy men, and men skilled in prophecies of Scripture, and watching the signs of the times think the coming of our Lord very nigh.

Oh! should not the children of God long and pray for that coming?

Is not the Lord as welcome as He is dear to His Church?

Crushed and bleeding humanity, groaning under the sufferings of ten thousand wrongs, cries out "*Return O Lord, how long?*"

The earth, weary with its burdens of sin and sorrow groans for redemption, "*Return O Lord, how long?*"

The Church, weary of its struggles and sorrows, and sins, re-echos the cry, "*Come Lord Jesus!*"



## CHAPTER III.

1. *By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth : I sought him, but I found him not.*
2. *I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth : I sought him, but I found him not.*
3. *The watchmen that go about the city found me : to whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth ?*
4. *It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth ?*

Of all troubles, soul troubles are the heaviest to bear. Griefs of the body and for the things of the body are indeed heavy to endure without murmuring or complaining. "But a wounded spirit who can bear?" For a soul which hath found Christ exceeding precious—hath rejoiced in His full salvation, "hath sat under His shadow with great delight," hath realised the assurance of a personal union with Christ."—" *My beloved is mine and I am His.*"—

for such a soul to loose sight of Christ so as to seem forsaken and deserted of Him, this is indeed a trouble and a calamity, such as needs very great faith and very strong consolation to bear up under, lest being swallowed up with over-much trouble it should fall into despair and the snare of the devil.

Now here we have the case of a Believer in deep spiritual trouble. How interesting and instructive to see how such an one is lead and taught in the school of Christ! Let us observe it diligently. The "*night*" spoken of, is evidently not the natural night, but that of a spiritual darkness, and the result too of sloth and lukewarmness.

It is evident from the place and posture of the soul that it was like the sluggard in Proverbs, stretching itself on a "bed of sloth."<sup>1</sup> It is clear that it was a spiritual night to the soul, and that because Christ was absent, "*I sought him, but found him not.*" As Christ's presence is day to the Believer's soul, so His absence brings thick darkness and night around it. Observe too here how very unsafe and incorrect a judgment you form either of your own spiritual state before God or that of others, if you judge yourself or them by your ever varying frames and feelings. It was but a little before this that the Church was enjoying the conscious presence of Christ,<sup>2</sup> yet here we find her bewailing Christ's

1. Prov. vi. 9.

2. Song of Solomon, iii: 3—9, 10.

departure. He was so far away, that though she sought Him, she could not find Him! As your salvation Believers is not of yourselves, but altogether from first to last the free gift of God in Jesus Christ, so also remember you do not, cannot keep yourselves, but He keeps you faithful unto the end, so that the real grounds for comfort and joy, though in a great measure affected by the diligent and holy way you walk with Christ, depends not upon your changing frames and feelings, but on the unchanging and unchangeable love of Christ, "who having loved His own who are in the world, loveth them unto the end."<sup>1</sup>

Does this meet the eye of any sin-burdened soul? Does the eye of one of God's children who is troubled in soul read these words?—come my afflicted brother or sister let us reason together. You once knew the joyful sounds and tasted the tidings of salvation. You entered into God's house with rejoicing and came into His presence with gladness of heart. Jesus was precious to you and His presence was realised by you. But now it is otherwise. You have lost your peace and joy in believing—lost the tokens of Christ's love the cry of your soul, is that of Job's."<sup>2</sup>—"*O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat! Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward,*

1. JAC. xiii. 1.

2. Job xviii. 3.

*but I cannot perceive him : On the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him : he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him."*

Now be instructed by the instance before us here. Possibly your case may be as bad or even worse than this. Christ and His presence and favours have departed from you. What a token of God's grace and favour is it that you are sensible of this! Samson "for a long while wist not that the Lord had departed from him."<sup>1</sup> What then becomes you at such a season? Have you grown lukewarm and slothful? Have you only sought for recovery of your peace in Jesus "by night on your bed?" No marvel then if you did not find Him. Surely it would have been a strange thing if thus seeking you had found! Be instructed by the conduct of the Church here (2nd verse). This was a good resolution. It proves the existence of true grace in the soul.

Here we see another important truth, that it is impossible, not only for a true Believer to dissemble a good or ill condition, but likewise impossible for him to be happy when He discovers that there is any distance between his soul and Christ.

"*I will rise,*" &c.—A soul seeking Christ, seeks him in right good earnest. "*I will go about the city.*" The city is figuratively put for the Church

I. Judges xvi. 20.

of God on earth and the "streets and broad ways of the city," plainly signify the gospel ordinances of His Church; those "windows and lattices" through which Christ shews himself; about which he walks, and in which he meets his people to bless them and to feed them. Note this especially, how diligent and exquisitely particular was this search after Christ. It was no careless superficial search, but a real earnest pursuit. No trouble was too great, no pains excessive, no reproach worthy of consideration, in seeking for lost Jesus. The soul seeks Him "all about the city," not only in a general way but in particular parts of it, "in the streets and broad-ways;" in the approved and public ordinances, and ministries in which Christ hath always promised to be found of them that diligently seek Him. Yet Christ is pleased to try his people's faith, so that patience may have its perfect work. "*I sought him, but found him not.*" Is this your case dear reader? Wouldest thou see Jesus? Hast thou sought Him so diligently, so faithfully, so earnestly, and yet after all failed in thy search? Disappointed and wearied hast thou been taught thus in Christ's school, that even means themselves the most ample, public and private, secret and social, the Word and the sacraments, though used most diligently and perseveringly, must not be rested in. These cannot reveal Christ to us unless He be pleased to reveal

Himself. "When He hideth His face who then can behold Him?"<sup>1</sup>

Most useful and blessed teaching! "In keeping Christ's commandments there is great reward;" in "watching daily at His gates and waiting at the door-posts of His House," there is found a blessing and favour in the sight of the Lord.

Thus are we taught by this seeking soul. Though disappointed in its search all through the "*city*," yet not cast down or giving up in despair, it is at last "*found by the watchmen that go about the city.*"

A "*watchman*" is used in Holy Scriptures to signify God's ministers, whose duty is to give heed (*i. e. watch*) to themselves and their doctrine: to be in "season and out of season," watching for souls. When thus going about the "*city*," (*i. e. doing their proper work of "winning souls to Christ," and watching against error and damnable heresies, and warning their flocks against them,*) it is that they often "find" wanderers like the one in the text, who are seeking after Jesus and desiring to find Him.

"*The Watchmen found me.*"—Ah! the day of the Lord only will reveal it—how many a weary soul, and thoughtless soul, and back-sliding soul, has been found by us ministers when preaching the Word of Grace! It is indeed one of the highest mysteries, one that humbles the creature into the

1. Job xxxiv. 29.

dust and exalts the sovereign majesty and love of God to the highest pinnacle of glory, that "by the foolishness of preaching," souls are continually being found, and led into the knowledge of the love of God in Jesus Christ. Yes! one of the greatest proofs that faith is the gift of God through Jesus Christ, by the operation of the eternal Spirit, is this glorious fact—"that we have this treasure in earthen vessels."<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, you observe that the Believer does not despise the "earthen vessels," but very highly esteems them "in love for their office sake."<sup>2</sup> So the seeking soul here. Having been "found" by the Ministers of the Word; some suitable message having been sent from God by these "*Watchmen*," she seeks them out, and inquires more particularly in private concerning Him—even Christ—for whose presence she inquires. And this reminds both Ministers and their flocks that Christ and his grace are the only fitting subjects for discourse in private interviews between ministers and the individual members of their flocks. Not for confession, still less for absolution, do you come to ministers. To Christ alone confess your sins, because he alone hath power to forgive your sins, and bestow absolution upon you. Be content to inquire from His Watchmen, "*Saw ye Him whom my soul loveth?*"

1. II. Cor. iv. 7.

2. I. Thes. v. 13.

Observe, "*Christ is not far from His ministers and ordinances of His Church.* He has promised to be with them "even unto the end of the world."<sup>1</sup> So here we find the seeking soul realising the promise, "It was but a little that I passed from them, I found Him whom my soul loveth." Thus, doubtless, many of His dear people have found Him, seeking Him through ordinances of His Church, looking not *to them* as the *end*, but *through* them, and *over* them, and *beyond* them to Christ. A word in season was spoken, to the convincing and refreshing of your soul. Like apples of gold, in pictures of silver, was the ministry of the Word. You left God's House in joy—"I have found him whom my soul loveth."

Has it indeed been thus with you, reader? Oh! then, while you bless God from your innermost soul, for His grace and mercy, never, never despise means. Never, never be above ministers and ordinances. The soul here who lost the "joy of salvation," found Jesus while coming from the Watchmen. Neither despise the ministers' Master and Lord, by putting them in His place. Remember, I beseech, as you love your souls, and would have them fed "with the finest of the wheat," that while Paul "plants," there also needs an "Apollos" to water. But neither Paul is anything, nor Apollos

1. Mat. xxviii. 20.



anything, but God alone, who giveth the increase.<sup>1</sup>

Reader, hast thou ever found Christ to be precious? Hath Christ found you by his Watchmen? Depend upon this, you will, more than once, in your earthly pilgrimage, lose sight of Jesus, and, in the bitterness of your soul exclaim, "I sought him, but found him not."

He may withdraw Himself because of your lukewarm, and unmannerly behaviour. He may hide himself to try your faith. Or some cloud of sin or unbelief on your own part may interpose between Him and yourself so that you cannot see His face. Therefore, I charge you solemnly, beware on your own part of driving Christ from you. Be watchful against this, by any provocation on your part. Beware of sloth and idleness in Spiritual employments, or weariness in Spiritual exercises. Beware of besetting sins of temper and disposition. Beware of shrinking from the daily bearing of the Cross. Mortify those sins which grieve away Christ's Spirit, and so provoke Him to hide His face for a season. Yet, notwithstanding all your watchful care, should your soul for a season be in darkness, remember, I beseech you, where and how to seek Him who is the Light. In these verses you have directions and encouragements which will help you in the darkest night.

It is vain, you well know, to seek Christ in a

1. I. Cor. iii. 7.

gay and thoughtless world. "*He is not all their thoughts.*" Ask them if Christ is with them in their follies and gaieties, in which they find their comfort; and they will smile at your simplicity, and ridicule your anxiety. It is equally vain to seek Him in the books of the learned. Page after page you may turn over but never find His name. Never, never will you find Him, till, like the soul in this passage of Scripture, you seek Him in His appointed ways—in His Church, in His Word, in His ordinances and sacraments.

"*In all times of your tribulation,*" my prayer is that you may find Jesus! Should sudden calamity or heartrending visitation, or sickness, or poverty, or spiritual darkness, overshadow you, may you have grace and strength to be still leaning upon Jesus!

Sooner or later you must enter on that night,—the black and solemn night of Death. Whether your sun shall go down in the midst of your days, or you remain to old age, and then slowly sink into the grave, I know not. This I know, Reader, you and myself will enter on that night of darkness—unless our Lord first come in glory—sooner or later.

Would you have "light" in your "dwelling," then?

Would you die in peace, with the dawn of the everlasting morning shining upon your spirit?

Would you, then, *rejoice* in Christ, rather than have to *seek* Him ?

Oh ! then, *now*, while it is called to-day, *seek Him !*

“*Rise now*,” and go about the City ; peradventure he will show himself.

And then shall you have a song in the night, and gladness instead of weeping, “ My flesh and my heart faileth me, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for evermore.”

Blessed be God ! a “ good time is coming,” a time of which it hath been said, there shall be “ no night there.”<sup>1</sup>

None there shall seek Jesus. None shall inquire of the Watchmen concerning Him.

All shall see Him, and behold His face in glory !

All shall look upon the Lamb that was slain !!

Sighs and groans, weepings and frettings, shall be hushed, then, for ever !!!

And those “ songs in the night,” which ye had been wont to sing on earth, shall be then changed for a new song—“ Worthy is the Lamb that was slain.”—

Where no shadows shall bewilder,  
Where life's vain parade is o'er,  
Where the chain of sin is broken,  
And the dreamer dreams no more :  
Where our bonds shall ne'er be severed ;  
Partings, farewells, tears, and groans ;

Midnight waking, twilight weeping,  
 Heavy noontide—all are done :  
 Where a King, in Kingly glory,  
 Such as earth has never known,  
 Shall assume the righteous sceptre,  
 Claim and wear the holy Crown—  
 Brethren, we shall meet, and rest,  
 'Mid the holy and the blest.

4. *I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me.*

5. *I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor wake my love, till he please.*

In the arms of faith and love alone, can the Church hold fast Jesus, and retain the joy of His salvation !

Those who have found him to be precious, will not be content to "*let him go*" without leaving, as in Jacob's case, a rich blessing behind him : both on their own account, as well also for the Church's, (the "*mother's house,*" the "*chambers,*") wherein souls are, by grace, conceived, through the ministry of the Word, and the due administration of Christ's ordinances.

Have you found Christ—Reader ? or, rather,

have you been *found of Him*? Then take Him home to your "house" Let all your dear relations and brethren be told of his great grace and love.

See that ye grieve Him not, lest He depart.

Let all "bitterness, and strife, and evil speaking, and clamour," be put away. Disturb Him not. "I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor wake my love, till he please."

6. *Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like  
pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and  
frankincense, with all powders of  
the merchant?*

God's dealings with ancient Israel were typical. They were "the portion of the Lord and the lot of His inheritance;" and so are all the souls which by grace are called to know and follow the Lamb of God.

Israel was brought up from the "*howling wilderness*," by cloud, and pillar of fire, and miracle: so are the "souls of the righteous" led up from the "*wilderness*" of nature into the garden of grace, which is the Church of Christ.

As they ascend from the maze of spiritual blindness, and the wilderness, their affections heavenward rise up towards God in Christ "*like*

*pillars of smoke !*" Christ's flock do not stand still, but, led by Him, their good Shepherd, continually are making head out of the wilderness. Their progress is visible. Their prayers, and holy services, like "*pillars of smoke*," rise up to Jesus, and are grateful and acceptable to God—being perfumed with sweet spices and holy incense—those fruits of the Spirit, which are, through Jesus Christ, acceptable to the Father, and well-pleasing in the sight of the Church's friends and companions.

But all these "graces," are from Christ. He is the "*Merchantman*" from far, who supplies His Church with the "aloes, myrrh and cassia." In Him only, and by His Holy Spirit are we able to offer sacrifices pleasing to God, of sweet-smelling savour. The larger our dealings with this rich "*Merchantman*," the more fragrant and plentiful our stores of grace. His merchandise is better than the "merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof of fine gold." But the merchandise of the earth will come to nought, and the merchants of Anti-Christ be confounded, as it is written :<sup>1</sup>—

"And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her ; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more. The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing,

1. Rev. xvii. 11—12.

and saying, Alas, alas that great city, that was clothed in fine linen and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls !”

7. *Behold his bed which is Solomon's ; threescore valiant men are about it, of the valiant of Israel.*

8. *They all hold swords, being expert in war : every man hath his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night.*

A greater than Solomon is here, and an object of admiration more beautiful than either his costly bed or his magnificent temple!—Christ's Church, wherein such as are appointed unto salvation “are begotten” and born again “by the incorruptible Word,” is the thing signified by this metaphorical language.

It is a “*bed*,” and that of rest, where the “weary and heavy laden” lie down in peace, none making them afraid.

It is also well guarded. More are with her than against her;<sup>1</sup> the Lord himself keeps her by night and by day. As “the mountains are round about Jerusalem,” so are the ministers of God and the holy angels set for the defence and guardianship of Christ's Church, and every member of His Body. The ministers and pastors of the flock are to prove

1. Is. xxvii. 2—3.

themselves valiant for the Church's defence; being always ready armed with "the sword of the Spirit."<sup>1</sup> With this, Christ expects them to be "*expert*," as well as "*valiant*," both to silence the fears of His people during the night of their doubts and fears, as well as comfort and support them.

The angels of God, which "excel in power,"<sup>2</sup> are the ministers of mercy, sent forth to minister<sup>3</sup> to every heir of Christ's Kingdom. Their number is more than Solomon's three-score valiant men. Their name is Legion, and their strength wonderful. By them, are His people, shielded from all "*terror by night*." They encamp around them, and deliver them, and to their unseen, watchful care, are the Lord's flock continually indebted for their wonderful and hair-breadth escapes!

Surely the Lord's people may rest in peace and feel secure, knowing that around their bed and about their path, the angels of God are commanded to watch, lest they "should at any time even dash their feet against a stone!"<sup>4</sup>

How free from wasting care and anxious thoughts ought they to be, who are thus assured of the Lord's charge over them!

They may be assaulted, but shall not be defeated; distressed, but not destroyed; wounded, but not

1 Ephes. vi. 17.      2 Psm. ciii. 20.      3 Heb. i. 14.

4 Psm. xci. 12.—II. Pet. i. 4.



slain; tossed to and fro, but not entirely wrecked. "In all things they shall be more than conquerors,"<sup>1</sup> through the great Captain of their salvation.

9. *King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon.*

10. *He made the pillars thereof of silver, the bottom thereof of gold, the covering of it of purple, the midst thereof being paved with love for the daughters of Jerusalem.*

11. *Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart.*

Here is a description of the "covenant work of redemption," and the glories that shall flow from its full and final accomplishment.

The "*chariot*," is that covenant of grace and love which the Almighty Father made with His well-beloved Son, on behalf of His Church, which He purchased with His own blood, and, in due time, will gather unto Himself, "without spot or blemish, or any such thing." In this, as in a royal "*chariot*," Jesus, the Head and Lord of the covenant, doth ride, displaying the glory of the triune

1 Rom. viii. 37.

God, in the sovereignty and wisdom, and fulness and freeness of Gospel grace and love.

In this "*chariot*," too, His people are carried; being borne along through all the dangers, temptations, and difficulties of the way (as Jacob was to Goshen) until finally they are carried triumphantly to Glory, with an abundant entrance into the Kingdom.

As this "*chariot*," was contrived and planned in the eternal will and counsel of the triune Jehovah, we may be sure it was well built, well devised, both for the glory of Jehovah, as well as the comfort of His Church. "It is "*ordered in all things, and sure.*"<sup>1</sup> Man had no hand in its construction. "*King Solomon,*" i.e. King Jesus, the "*Angel of the Great Council,*"<sup>2</sup> was the Author of it. "He made it."

Its materials are as lasting as the "*wood*," and immovable as the mountains of "*Lebanon*." The wood of Lebanon never decays, and the mountains of Lebanon abide unto this day. Even so the words of the covenant are sure and steadfast. Its "*pillars are of silver,*" i.e. its promises, are "yea and amen."<sup>3</sup> Jesus will not break His Word, nor alter the thing that is gone out from His lips.<sup>4</sup> His covenant promises are "exceeding great and precious,"

1. 2 Saml. xxiii 5. 2. Isaiah ix. 6. 3. II. Cor. i. 20.

4. Psm. lxxxix. 34.

of more worth than "thousands of gold and silver," and invaluable as the sure mercies of David. The more they are handled by Faith, the brighter their lustre.

The "bottom" is of "gold," the most lasting, and the most precious of all metals. This marks it as everlasting and most safe. There's no danger of any falling through. It has such a strong and immovable bottom as can never be broken.

Its covering is of "purple," which is the "blood of the everlasting covenant." Beneath this covering, Christ's Church is safe. Not one single drop of the Father's wrath against sinners shall ever drop on the heads of those who are once seated in this glorious "chariot," in the midst of which, and on all sides of it are displayed that "love of Christ which passeth all understanding."

When souls join themselves to Jesus (being drawn by the Spirit to see His grace, and behold the glory of His covenant) this is the day of "His espousals." By a mystery of Grace, He is joined to them, and is one with them, and they with Him.

They go forth out of themselves, and out of the crowd of the world; and dwell with joy and delight on the glorious prospect which Faith sets before them, of that Glory which shall be revealed in the day when the "voice of the great multitude,

*and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of many thunderings," shall be heard, saying, "Alleluia : for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him : for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready."*<sup>1</sup>

Let him that readeth understand, and remember the Word of the Lord—"Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb."

1. Rev. xix. 6—7.

## CHAPTER IV.

1. *Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair;  
thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks: thy hair is as a  
flock of goats, that appear from mount Gilead.*
2. *Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn,  
which came up from the washing; whereof every one  
bear twins, and none is barren among them.*
3. *Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is  
sweety: thy temples are like a piece of pome-  
granate within thy locks.*
4. *Thy neck is like the tower of David builded for an  
army, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers,  
all shields of mighty men.*
5. *Thy two breasts are like two young roes, that are twins,  
which feed among the lilies.*
6. *Until the day break and the shadows flee away, I will  
get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the  
hill of frankincense.*
7. *Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.*

*Those who honour Christ He will also honour.<sup>1</sup>*

1. Sam. ii. 30.

In the previous Chapter, (v. 6.) the daughters of Jerusalem had stood admiring the spouse of Christ, which is His Church. But, with true and becoming modesty and humility, she bids them look from her to Jesus, and behold the riches of His grace and the glory of His covenant.

Here the Lord honours His Church—speaking of her beauty and comeliness, which, though all His own free gift by the spirit, He delights in. He reminds her of these, to teach her in what she might glory, as well for her own encouragement as for the attraction of others to her company.

He praises her in seven things—seven being a perfect number, and intimating the manifold nature and perfection of her graces.

“*Thou hast doves’ eyes* ;” not eagles’ eyes which can face the sun—but the humble, gentle, modest, pure, inoffensive eyes of the dove

Her “*hair*,” is as that of the white goats on mount Gilead, which, says Solomon elsewhere, “*are comely in their going* ;”<sup>1</sup> which may mean the “chaste conversation” and “the meek and quiet spirit” of Believers, which in the “sight of God are of great price.”<sup>2</sup>

Her “*teeth*” are white as “*sheep*” come up from “*the washing*.” The teeth of the Church are faith and meditation, by which believers eat

1. Prov. xxx. 29—31.

2. I. Pet. iii. 4.

the word of God<sup>1</sup> as did Jeremiah—feed upon it as David<sup>2</sup> and Job,<sup>3</sup>—live upon Christ's "flesh and blood," in a spiritual, holy, and most intimate communion.<sup>4</sup>

Her "*lips*" are like a thread of scarlet, purified and washed in the blood of Jesus, from all uncleanness. With them, the Church utters her prayers, and speaks the praises of Him who hath opened her *lips*, to show forth the riches of His grace and the cleansing power of His blood.

Her "*temples*," or "*cheeks*," are like a "piece of pomegranate, between her locks," indicating modesty, shamefacedness, and humility.

"Her "*neck*," *i.e.* her faith, which is the connecting part and link between the Church and Christ, her head—is like the tower of David, on whose walls hang bucklers, and spears, and swords, for battle; every weapon that is needed for the Church's state militant, here on earth.

Faith obtains the trophies of the Church's victories. They are all "*hung up*," and mentioned in most honourable terms in the 11th Chapter of St. Paul to the Hebrews.

The ministry of the Word, and the due celebration of the sacraments, are the "*two breasts*" of the Church, by which the "sincere milk of the

1. Jer. xv. 16.

2. Ps. cxix. 103.

3. Job xxiii. 12.

4. John vi. 56.

Word," and consolations of the Gospel are given to them who like "*young fawns*," in simplicity and child-like faith, "*feed among the lilies*:" those precious doctrines, promises, exhortations and Church ordinances, wherein Christ feeds the sheep of His pasture.

Thus comely and beautiful in Christ's sight are His dear people. It passes our comprehension that creatures so vile and base, can possibly be pleasing in the sight of Jesus. But so it is. If "found in him," and clothed in the rich garments of His righteousness—all Believers are "*fair*"—there is "*spot*" in them.

But who that knows himself—his blindness, ignorance, pride, and naughtiness of heart; even when assured of all this—does not "rejoice with trembling?"<sup>1</sup>

Who does not long for the "*mountains of spices*," and the dawn of that "*everlasting day*," when all shadows shall "flee away;" when our eyes shall behold Him, and not another; and when, in the full glorious light of His countenance, not a single blemish, or spot, or any such thing shall be found upon the face of the righteous?

1. Phil. ii. 12.



8. *Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon : look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards.*

The mountains here mentioned were situated in different parts—mostly to the north of the land of Israel.

Lebanon is well known for its cedar trees. Amana was a mountain which divided Cilicia from Syria ; the river which here took its name is mentioned.<sup>1</sup> Shenir and Hermon were one and the same mountains called by different names.<sup>2</sup>

All these might be called "*lions' dens, &c.,*" not only because they were inhabited by these animals, but also by robbers and cruel, ferocious savages.

What does Christ intend in thus calling His Church from the midst of these mountains and "*dens of lions ?*"

Generally, this represents the calling of Christ's Church from all corners and quarters of the world. But, in particular, it describes the calling of particular members of that Church ; setting forth by the figures employed, the condition and nature of those who are brought nigh to Jesus, and by Him called to a saving knowledge of His salvation.

1. II. Kings v. 12

2. Deut. iii. 9.

Notice (I.) the title Christ here gives His Church —“*my spouse*.” This is the first time we meet with this name. He uses it to set forth the close union that exists between Himself and His people.

What can be more expressive of Christ’s love and union with His Church than the figure employed.

“*This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and His Church.*”<sup>1</sup> The same relation which the wife bears to her husband, Christ does to His Church. As the husband conveys certain civil rights to the wife, so does Christ to the Church. All that he has, becomes hers, and all that the Church has becomes Christ’s.

His *grace* and *glory* is hers, and her *sins* and *debts* are laid to him.

He gave himself, *his whole self*; all that was in God to acquire *merit*, all that was in man to endure *agony, shame, and suffering*.

This, then, is the party called.

(II.) Observe the places whence He called His “*spouse*”—“*with me from Lebanon*,” &c.

These figures point out that the natural condition and disposition of those whom Christ calls, is not such as to deserve his notice; but quite the contrary.

“By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not yourselves; it is the gift of God.”<sup>2</sup>

1 Eph. v. 32.

2 Tim. 12—13.

How clearly is this set forth in the case of Paul. Take St. Paul's testimony, "I know that in *me*, (i.e. my flesh) dwelleth no "good thing."

But not only from barren mountains, but from "*lion's dens*" and "*mountains of leopards*" are Christ's Saints called.

How true and just a description of the untamed and unchanged hearts of men!

Look at the catalogue St. Paul enumerates:—Gal. v.

David also speaks of the wicked men he was among, saying—"My soul is among lions."

Paul likewise calls the persecuting emperor Nero "*the lion*,"<sup>1</sup> out of whose mouth the Lord delivered him.

And is this the true, scriptural condition of our condition by nature? How does it commend to us the grace and love of God in Jesus Christ!

Had we been princes, great and virtuous, oh! it had been most marvellous condescension, on the part of the great God, to receive us into His kingdom! For us to be His people, and Himself to be our king!

But to take fallen, lost, sinful, vile, and worthless souls into union the most close and endearing! How incomprehensible, such grace and love!

Consider also this—God stood in no need of us.

1. II. Tim. iv. 17.

“Can a man be profitable unto God? Is it any gain to Him that thou makest thy ways perfect?”

“If thou be righteous, what givest thou Him?”<sup>1</sup>

Surely the nature of angels, even though fallen, was more honourable than that of fallen men.

They had fallen from Heaven: man upon earth.

Was it a small matter that He should pass by them and choose us—calling us from the “*lions’ dens and the mountains of leopards?*” “*God hath chosen the weak things to confound the things which are mighty; and things which are despised hath God chosen: yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence.*”<sup>2</sup>

Seeing then your natural state, looking at the “hole of the pit whence you were digged,” learn a lesson of humility. There is nothing more horrible than spiritual pride!

Who is there that boasts of their pedigree, or spiritual attainments, or civil condition in the flesh?—Here is your origin—the “*lions’ den*” and “*mountains of leopards.*”

Have you, then cause for self-gratulation? Who hath made you to differ, or whose grace caused you to come from these dens into the Kingdom of Light and to the holy mountain?

Notice the invitation, “Come with me,” “even

1. Job xxii. 2—3.

2. I. Cor. i. 26.

with *me*." Thus Christ calls poor ruined sinners.

"There is a two-fold call in Christ's Word—an external call: such is that which Christ speaks of "Many are called, few chosen." Every man that lives under the preaching of the Gospel, is "thus called."

There is also an *internal* call, when the arm of the Lord is revealed in power; this is the especial work of the Holy Spirit. "Every man that hath heard and learned of the Father comes to me."<sup>1</sup> Such call is an effectual and saving call. This, is intended here, and something more.

This call here is to follow Christ, even though in circumstances of peril and danger, and to keep up in holy fellowship with Him, even in the midst of difficulties and temptations, while the the great lion, roaring after his prey, seeks to devour us.

Of this, we may rest assured—that while in Christ's company, and walking in holy fellowship with Him, we may walk among the "*lions' dens*," and through "*mountains of leopards*:" tread on the adder and scorpion, and yet escape all harm.<sup>2</sup>

There seems an intimation, also, in the text of a time coming when Christ's Church "*shall come*" (for such is the more literal rendering), some from Lebanon in the north, Amana in the west, Hermon in the east, and Shenir in the south.

1. Jno. vi. 45.

2. Ps. xci. 13.



They shall come to the Lord's holy mountain of Zion; all shall be peace, and joy, and love—<sup>1</sup>

*“ The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fattling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”*<sup>2</sup>

9. *Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck.*
10. *How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! how much better is thy love than wine! and the smell of thine ointments than all spices!*
11. *Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb; honey and milk are under thy tongue; and the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon.*

In language which passes all human affection—even the most pure and impassioned—does the Lord Jesus thus again address His Church.

1 Mat. vi. 9.

2 Isaiah xi. 6.

"*Thou hast,*" says he, "*ravished my heart,*" or "unheartened me."

This is expressed in the Hebrew text by one word, "and is used in this form and sense no where else but twice in this verse, for Christ's love being so unspeakable,<sup>1</sup> and inexpressible, he coins new words whereby to discover it."

Never was love like unto Christ's love. "The wound of love towards the Church, which He had from eternity in Himself, made Him neglect and be unmindful of all the wounds and reproaches of the cross."

He loves dearly what He purchased so dearly. This love adorns His Church's souls with those very graces, which, like goodly "*chains*" (even "*one*" is most precious in His sight) attract His eye. This love bestows the graces of the Spirit, which are like the fragrant "*ointment*" of spikenard, very precious, giving forth a goodly smell, "pleasing and acceptable to God;"<sup>2</sup> while, by the same Spirit, the lips of His Church "*drop*" words of prayer, and utter sounds of praise; which, in Christ's eyes and ears are as the "*droppings of the honeycomb*;" fragrant as the breath of one who feeds on "*honey and milk*," and whose garments (their public profession for Christ) smell as the smell of the cedar "*of Lebanon*."

1. Eph. iii. 19.

2. Phil. ix. 18.

Behold, professing Church of Christ, the picture drawn by Jesus of His Church, which He hath purchased and adorned for Himself ! What likeness is there between you and it ?

Search and see. Take one point for trial—The “*poison of asps*” is under the tongue of the carnal hypocritical professor, but “*honey and milk*,” words sweet and edifying, under the lips of Believers. Try yourself, professor, by this one test. Judge your own self. Assuredly hereafter by “*thy words shalt thou be justified, and by thy words shalt thou be condemned.*”<sup>1</sup>

Your speech berayeth you !

12. *A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse ; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.*

13. *Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits ; camphire with spikenard.*

14. *Spikenard and saffron ; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense ; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices.*

There is nothing upon earth which can truly be likened to a garden or fountain of waters, but the Church of Jesus Christ, which is His mystical body, the company of all faithful souls.

“ All else is a moral wilderness.”

1. Mat. xii. 37.



In these words he describes it as a very choice and pleasant garden, full of most valuable and fruitful trees and plants, which His own right hand has planted and continually waters.<sup>1</sup>

It is "*a garden inclosed*," a paradise separated from the wilderness around, and appropriated for His own special enjoyment and pleasure.

It is "*inclosed*," for distinction's sake, by the free and sovereign grace of God, which separated St. Paul, and every other soul appointed unto salvation for himself.<sup>2</sup>

It is "*inclosed*" for protection's sake ; being kept<sup>3</sup> by Christ's power. "He is a wall of fire," round about His Church, so that the gates of Hell cannot prevail against her.

It is a garden "*walled up*" (for so the term signifies.)<sup>4</sup> Christ is the great Vineyard Master, who keeps the key at His girdle. He opens the door and keeps guard, so that none can enter in, saving those whom He opens unto.<sup>5</sup>

Reader, all this implies a visible and very manifest separation on the part of every professing member of Christ's Church. Wherein is it visible in these days of diluted Christianity, and formal, nominal discipleship?

Where is the clear and unmistakeable separation

1. Ps. lxxx. 15.

2. Gal. i. 15.

3. I. Pet. i. 5.

4. Mat. v. 2.

5. Rev. iii. 7.—Jno. x. 7.

between the world and the Church, which these expressions so certainly imply, and the bright example of the first believers so fully respond to?

Where is the inviolable chastity and purity, such as the "*spring shut up and fountain sealed*," imply? Is it so that Believers are so strictly kept<sup>1</sup> from the touch of the world's polluted and polluting finger, that her fountain of living waters are ever pure and sparkling? Alas! how unlike the description here, is the professing Church of this day!

Where are the "plants of renown" among us, with all manner of pleasant fruits and grateful spices, acceptable to the great Vineyard Master, and useful and profitable to his servants?

Where are the "*orchards of pomegranates*," so noted for the variety and abundance of their fruits?

Where are felt and seen the rich and fragrant graces of the Spirit, which, like "*camphire, spike-nard, saffron*," and *cinnamon*, are alike rich and fragrant in perfume, as well as warming and comforting to the palate; and more or less healthful and medicinal to the body?

15. *A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon.*

The Church here speaks, and abruptly breaking in upon the glowing description of her excellencies,

1. James i. 27.

ascribes all her fruitfulness and glory to Him who is a "*fountain of gardens*" (such is the fulness of His grace;) a "*well of living waters*" (such is the perpetuity and exhaustless nature of His grace;) as "*streams from Lebanon*" (full, and free, and abundant as the mountain torrents.)

Oh! to realize this fulness—this inexhaustable abundance and freeness of the love, and blood, and grace of Jesus!

All our "*fresh springs*,"<sup>1</sup> are in Him—all our fruitfulness, all our happiness, all our security, are in the boundless, bottomless, unfathomable, incomprehensible, immeasurable, grace and love of Jesus.

Truly the "well is deep."<sup>2</sup> But the same grace and love which fills it with "*living water*," gives the bucket of faith wherewith to draw out and refresh the souls of the weary.

Sit not down, O Church of Christ, weeping by the rivers of Babylon—or disconsolate, like Hagar in the dry and thirsty desert.

Behold the angel of the Lord showeth thee a well of water, sweeter than that from which Hagar drank—deeper than that which Isaac called Rehboth—easier to draw from than Jacob's well at Sychar: the well is nigh thee—"On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, if any man thirst let him come unto me and drink!"<sup>3</sup>

1. Ps. lxxxvii. 7.    2. Gen. xxvi. 22.    3. Jno. vii. 37.

Believer, if in a "dry and thirsty land" you faint and sit down in your spiritual journey, let it be by "Jacob's well." "Ply the ordinances of God, and the God of ordinances will come to thee" and refresh thy wearied soul !

16. *Awake, thou north wind ; and come, thou south ; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.*

That nothing may be wanting for the fruitfulness of His Church, the Lord calls for the "*north wind*" of keen and chastening discipline to awake, and the gentle, soothing "*south wind*" to blow upon His "*garden*," (for it is He who speaks, and to Him, only, the "*garden*" belongs,) that both may bring out the "*spices*"—the graces of His believing people.

The operations of the Spirit are diverse, both in manner and effect. "This wind blows where it lists, and as it lists, in what manner it lists, and on whom it lists. This Spirit is a gift, and gifts are free."

Jesus, to whom the "*garden*" belongs, alone knows when to call for the "*north*," and when the "*south winds*."

Happy that Church, that "*garden*" of the Lord, which is taught both how to "abound" and how to "suffer" affliction !

Happy the Believer, who, whether enduring the blasts of the "*north*:" or enjoying the pleasant breezes of the "*south wind*"—the comforts of the gospel—the joy and peace of the Holy Ghost; is, in both cases, enabled to yield "*spices*," pleasing and grateful to the Lord of the vineyard.

Blessed, most blessed, effects of tribulation or blessing, which, like the wind (whether north or south) "sweeping the chords of the *Æolian harp*" with sweet and pleasant sounds, says, in the language of conscious fruitfulness, "*Let my Beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits.*"

## CHAPTER V.

1. *I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse : I have gathered my myrrh with my spice ; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey ; I have drunk my wine with my milk : eat, O friends ; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.*

Most ready is Christ to hear and answer the prayers of His Church. Scarcely had the prayer for His presence gone forth from her lips, than lo ! Jesus is present.

*"Thou shalt cry, and He shall say here I am."*<sup>1</sup>

How greatly does He delight in the souls, the gracious souls of His dear people !

With what satisfaction does He "*gather*" the fruits ; and "*drink*" not the wine only, which is for strong men, but even condescend to the "*milk*"—the small things—the little tokens of His Church's grateful and adoring love !

And what grace is here displayed. The Church invites her Lord. He comes and "brings the banquet Himself, and the guests also."

\* How free, and hearty, and loving His invitation—  
*“Eat O my friends.”* These only are welcomed  
 at His table. How abundant His provisions—*“He  
 satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry  
 soul with goodness.”*<sup>1</sup>

Believers, may your souls be as this *“garden”*  
 of the Lord, so that He can sup with you and you  
 with Him!<sup>2</sup>

Be not straightened in Him, or His grace: *“Be  
 not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled  
 with the Spirit.”*<sup>3</sup>

Of the wine of the kingdom Jesus bids you  
 drink abundantly; yea, *“drink of the rivers of  
 God’s pleasure<sup>4</sup> and be abundantly satisfied.”*<sup>5</sup>

2. *I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my  
 beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me my sister,  
 my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head  
 is filled with dew, and my locks with  
 the drops of the night.*

This evidently is not an unconscious state. It is  
 a state of sleep, but not the sleep of spiritual death.  
 It is the slumber of one who is only half awake.  
 This is a most dangerous state of soul for a Christian;

1. Ps. cvii. 9.      2. Rev. iii. 20.      3. Eph. v. 18.

4. Ps. lxxxv. 26.      5. Ps. lxv. 4.

most grieving to the Lord's Spirit, though not incompatible with true grace. Indeed here, in the case before us, it was *the Church* who was in this sad condition.

Let us try to ascertain something of the nature of such a condition, and then see the manner in which the Lord deals with it.

I. I think one great evidence of a slumbering soul, is a dull, cold, lukewarm perception and enjoyment of spiritual religion: holding, perhaps, the truth in its theory, without exhibiting its savour and reality in the life.

If I see one, of whose gracious state I cannot properly doubt, grow weak in faith and cold in love; slothful in spirit; negligent about attending means of grace; palliating or excusing little sins ("is it not a little one?") exhibiting signs and symptoms of decided love for the world; impatient of all serious conversation about Christ and eternal things; then I cannot doubt that such an one is "*slumbering*."

If I meet with aged professors, and find them only babes in Christ—having little grace and little maturity—learners, when, for the time, they ought to be teachers; contenting their souls with outward ordinances; feeding on the mere husks; preferring the friendship of unconverted persons; then I am not in doubt that such are "*slumbering*" souls.

Now, in all such cases, and in all the variety of symptoms of *slumbering, slothful* souls, this will be



observed: the affections are dull and cold; the service formal and legal; they have left their "first love;"<sup>1</sup> prayer is shortened and only languid; the form observed, but little real prayer engaged in; the Word read, but hurriedly, just as a salve to quiet conscience, and because habit calls for it.

The service of God in the sanctuary, though not altogether forsaken, yet only half liked; not enjoyed.

The company of the righteous shunned.

A faithful awakening Christ-preaching ministry no longer sought after.

Family worship, omitted or slurred over.

These and many others, alas! too many to dwell upon, are among the many symptoms of a sleeping soul.

And what are the causes which lead to such a condition?

Prosperity is one cause which promotes such a condition: the pride of life; love of show; doing as our wealthy and worldly neighbours do.

And the pride of poverty, too, which leads to over carefulness, and spirit of murmuring, and rebellion, envyings towards others, and thus towards God himself; this is "*a fly in the ointment*," which destroys the sweet savour of our spiritual state before God. This "dries up" the fountain of the Christian's soul; makes him an empty vessel, a dry and unctionless root!

1. Rev. ii. 4.

Your profession or your business ; or, if you have neither, your very idleness ; your politics : these all help to hinder your soul's chariot wheels—these all tend, when too closely followed, to drown your soul in slumber.

Believer, such are some symptoms and such some causes which lead to a slumbering state of soul !

Now here, in sight of God, I ask you a question—

Are you a sleepy Christian ?

Where is your zeal, where your love, where your contrition of soul ; where your delight in Jesus, and longings for communion with him ? Ah ! you slumber ! You slumber ! This displeases Him ! This robs your soul of the joy of His presence ! This provokes Him to absent Himself from you. Awake, O slumberer, and arise and call upon thy God !

Observe (II.) the manner in which Christ deals with the slothful, sleepy soul.

The Church—I mean the true portion of it—the living, spiritual portion of it—sometimes, through manifold infirmities, falls into an idle, lukewarm,<sup>1</sup> sleepy condition. Yet, though asleep, yet not dead asleep ! Grace is an immortal principle. “ It is always alive, though not always alike lively.” It is “ a well of living waters,”<sup>2</sup> and though sometimes through the cares of this life, and the deceitfulness of riches, the spring seems choked up and the foun-

1. Rev. iii. 16.

2. Jno. iv. 14.

tain sealed, still the well is there, and the spring of water, only it is hidden and polluted.

So here; life existed, but in a very low and feeble and emasculated condition.

This is plain, because none save those who are true disciples can recognise Christ's voice. This is the distinguishing characteristic of a real Believer. "And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know His voice."<sup>1</sup>

So, then, a soul may be truly united to Christ by living faith, and yet be in an unspiritual and sleepy state; but when in that state of drowsiness, still can distinguish the voice of Christ! It was even thus with the Church.

How, then, does the Lord deal with such a case as this? Does He leave it alone in its sloth to perish? Does he forsake the work of his own hands; thus provoked and grieved?

Far otherwise. He that begins,<sup>2</sup> also perfects the good work. "The gifts and callings of God are without repentance."<sup>3</sup> It is not Christ's way of dealing, notwithstanding all our rude manners, to go away, and leave His weak and erring disciples.

Christ is not so fickle in His love to His Church. His grace is too gracious, His covenant too sure, that he should forsake those whom He hath pur-

1. Jno. x. 3—4, 27.    2. Phil. i. 6.    3. Rom. xi. 29.

chased with His own blood, and appointed unto everlasting salvation.

Therefore, he uses discipline. He not only speaks, but "knocks." "Those whom He loves, He chastens."<sup>1</sup> He will not let them alone in their sloth. He will not suffer them to go on sleeping, but will interfere even with strikes and knocks, afflictions and rebukes.<sup>2</sup>

Now this I take to be the meaning of the expression here.

Christ knocketh at the hearts of sinners, by His Word and Gospel message.

"He hath the key of David in his hands, and openeth, and no man shutteth."<sup>3</sup>

Many a heart, like Lydia's, has been opened by this key! No strong door, or bolts and bars can resist the "hammer of His Word." This prepares His way, throws down the strongholds of Satan, takes from man the strong armour in which he trusted, and makes his soul the dwelling-place of God.<sup>4</sup>

But manifestly this is not the meaning of the passage.

This first work was done. Christ's love had been shed abroad in the soul; but He, having been grieved for a little season, departed, both to teach

1. Rev. iii. 19.    2. Ps. xxxix. 28—34.    3. Rev. iii. 7.

4. Luke xi. 21.

the Church without Him how helpless her condition was ; how quickly she falls into temptation ; and ; but for His grace, would fall away utterly !

Behold, therefore, the faithfulness and love of Jesus, in sending chastisements, rebukes, and warnings, to rouse us from a state alike grievous and dishonouring to Him, as it is injurious to ourselves, and destructive to our soul's peace and prosperity.<sup>1</sup>

*"He knocketh."* Does not that expression set forth the "mystery of Christ's power over man's conscience ?"

Does it not intimate the vast instrumentality He employs ?

*"He knocketh."* The expression is equivalent to saying "He is continually doing it, until the door is opened, and He enters in."

By his providential mercies, He "knocks" at our hearts, continually seeking to draw out the voice of gladness and gratitude, and constrain us to open the door of our hearts to Him.

How tenderly does the Lord deal with us day by day ! Our daily mercies—our health—our life, the smiling faces of our little ones ; our goings out and comings in—journeyings and abidings in our own home. These all have their voices, and day by day come "knocking" at the doors of our hearts. Let us ever open unto them.

1. Rev. iii. 20.

Let the noble, generous, gush of gratitude rise up continually to our Heavenly Father, tinged with the crimson of Jesus' blood.

It becometh well the righteous to be thankful ! Praise is comely for the upright.<sup>1</sup> The mercies of a Believer are *double* mercies, because all come as covenant gifts through Jesus Christ. Except for Jesus, not even our lowest mercies had come upon us.

In this sense, "the Lord is loving unto every man" He bestows on him the lower mercies of His providence, as well as the higher opportunities of grace. These, though unheeded, are so many "knockings" at a man's heart, to the intent he may open unto Jesus.

Jesus "knocks," too, at men's hearts—especially Believers—with another and sterner voice—discipline.

Look at Jacob, he was an erring child of God.

How sternly did the Lord's discipline handle that tried and afflicted patriarch.

Yet who that is spiritually taught fails to see in Jacob, oftentimes a sleepy slothful Believer, whose heart was estranged from the Lord, by the cares of family, and the idolatrous, selfish love for some of his children, to the disparagement of the others.

See how God corrected him and chastened his

1. Ps. cxlvii. 1.

soul continually. Voice after voice ; correction after correction, all speaking the same thing—"Open unto me."

But behold a still more wondrous display of the tenderness and long-suffering of Christ. He had "knocked," but still no opening of soul.

Rebukes and chastisements he might, indeed, have poured out in tenfold measure, but he will plead with the voice of love.

He thus addresses his sleeping slothful desciple, "Open to me, my love, my dove, my undefiled."

How full of grace and tenderness are these expressions !

Not one word of reproach or complaint escapes His lips.

Though acting towards him in the most ungracious manner—He still addresses His Church most tenderly and in the most patient manner.

Extravagant as expressions like this may seem to be, to unregenerate and unenlightened readers, they are in strict accordance with the very language employed in the New Testament, and oftentimes by our Lord himself. Thus, compare with this very passage Mark iii. 35.

Those who by faith are espoused to Christ, are most dear to Him. He keepeth their feet,<sup>1</sup> so that they do not utterly turn out of the way.

1. Prov. x. 8.

Being clothed with His righteousness, which is as fine linen, pure and white, they are, in His eyes, "undefiled."

Being filled with His Spirit, they are pure, gentle, and loving as the "dove."

Now why, does Christ thus address His Church, by all these loving and endearing titles?

Look to this for a moment. It brings out the consolations of the Gospel, and sets forth the security of the "covenant of grace," which is "ordered in all things, and sure."<sup>1</sup>

Here is a gracious soul asleep. Here is a child of God, a true disciple, slumbering.

The Lord does not judge as you and myself may judge each other. He sees the end from the beginning. He sees true faith, even though small as a grain of mustard seed, and he nourisheth it and cherisheth it. He neither despises the day of small things, nor forsakes utterly such as for a time walk in darkness, and even inconsistency. Thus, though "asleep," still he owns it as His Church, His "own," which He had purchased with His own blood.

Though slumbering and slothful and regardless of her high and holy calling, still He calls her "His love, His dove, His undefiled."

His feelings were not altered. His faithfulness,

1. II. Sam. ii.—iii. 5.



and love, and promise, were all engaged on behalf of His Church, which shows the speaker here to be "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."<sup>1</sup>

Observe, too, His touching remonstrance, "*for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.*" Allusion, here, is made to Christ's sufferings for His Church.

There is evidently an agreement between those sufferings of Christ, which He endured by night and by day, when he trod the valleys and mountains of Israel, and those here.

Christ reminds His slothful disciples of this. He remonstrates with them by reminding them of the deep sufferings which, for them, he undergoes—"*My head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.*"

"Did I not come down from heaven? Did I not endure the curse, despising the shame? Was I not a wanderer by day and by night, with no place wherein to lay my head? Did I not endure the hidings of God's face? Did not the "bloody sweat" fill my locks? Wherefore then am I shut out from thy heart?—I who ought to be so welcome! How unkind—how ungrateful! how forgetful!—" *Open to me, my love, my dove, my undefiled.*"

Reader, it may be you have long ago believed

unto salvation; you have passed from death unto life; the Lord has given you to know something of the blessed peace of believing, and you have tasted the Lord is gracious. What then is the health of your soul at this moment?

Is it well with thee? How beats the pulse of your spiritual affections for Jesus? What know you of the joy of His salvation? As your affections for Jesus are, so your zeal, holiness, purity, and real life.

Say, are you like the Church; only in a poor, half-awake, slothful condition—one eye open and the other shut; one half of your heart with Him and the other half caring for the ease and luxury which the bed of sloth invites to?

Be warned! Depend on this if you are not deceived; if you are not a mere painted hypocrite; if in other words, Christ has really set His love on you and sealed you as His own, you are calling for strokes and rebukes and chastisements “that will lay you even with dust,” in thus permitting sleep and sloth to creep over your souls.

Be roused therefore oh slumbering Church of God!

Awake! and stand up upon your feet!

Look diligently to your ways!

“Behold the Bridegroom cometh,” go ye forth to meet Him!

3. *I have put off my coat ; how shall I put it on ? I have washed my feet ; how shall I defile them ?*
4. *My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him.*
5. *I rose up to open to my beloved ; and my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock.*
6. *I opened to my beloved ; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone : my soul failed when he spake : I sought him, but I could not find him ; I called him, but he gave me no answer.*

Three points here deserve attention. (I.) The vain excuses—(II.) the gracious security—(III.) the solemn chastisement of a slothful Believer.

We have seen how Christ dealt with the lukewarm, sleepy souls. We noticed His faithfulness, His long-suffering, and His tenderness, while enduring so long and so patiently the coldness and ingratitude of one for whom He had done and suffered such great and bitter things.

It seems that all His "*knockings*," and most tender calls and earnest pleadings, were unavailing ! The sloth-loving, self-pleasing soul opens not to her Beloved. She presumes even to offer most unworthy and frivolous excuses.—"*I have put*," &c. How

sinful, how vain, how unkind, such excuses! They are the very language of sloth.<sup>1</sup>

How paltry, and foolish, and slothful, are such excuses. What could be more so? Will they stand the test of truth—of spiritual reason? Was it a sufficient and good reason to excuse herself from the trouble of coming down to open the door, because she had put off her coat, *i. e.*, laid it aside, (and the girdle of sincerity with it,) with a determined will at all hazards to enjoy a “little more sleep and a little more slumber?”

It was an unworthy, an untruthful excuse! So likewise are those we hear, and give continually. Christ knocks at the door, and we excuse ourselves, “we have no power,” and “no time” to become so Holy, and self-denying.

These are not truthful in the lips of a professed Believer. How should we dare to offer them, when God says—(Matt. vi. 33). The Lord joins precept with promise. He knows we have time, and if we say we have not time “we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.”

And then, as to having no power, St. Paul says “*I can do all things,*”<sup>2</sup> &c. Now, would the Spirit of God mock us with vain words. No one felt more keenly or bitterly his own weakness than St. Paul, yet he confesses “*I can do all things,*” &c.

I. Prov. xx. 14., also Prov. xxii. 13.    2 Phil. iv. 13.

I charge you for your own soul's peace, and joy and comfort in the Holy Ghost—beware of allowing yourselves in any excuse! Is Christ knocking, at this moment, at the door of your heart?—then open to Him at once. Does He rebuke you for lukewarmness, or inconstancy, or profitlessness, in His work and service; a love of the world, (your own little world,) or want of zeal for His glory, for the souls of the unconverted, or for unmortified tempers and unsanctified dispositions, or faithless dealings with your own conscience? Oh! begin not to make excuses, open at once to Him!

(II.) Let us notice how Christ deals with such ingratitude and wayward naughtiness.

Oh! what could not we say of His dealings with us—His tenderness, and love, and long-suffering, and patience, and grace, towards us! How shall we describe it? We can but exclaim with the Apostle, overwhelmed with the contemplation of it, "*O the depths.*"

Jesus is represented here as appealing to the will, to the affections, to the judgement of His slumbering Church—but all without effect. The door remained closed up and barred, until He who hath the "key of David," opens the heart in a way suited to it, (just as the proper key alone will fit the wards of a particular lock.) That key which he carries at his girdle is the one which alone can open man's

heart, sinner or saint, in such a manner as not to put "any force upon its nature, but only upon its ill-nature." "*My Beloved put in His hand,*" &c. These words intimate a divine work on the soul, through the power of Christ's Spirit. It was the effectual working of the Holy Spirit, making willing in the day of His power.<sup>1</sup>

And so you must confess, whose hearts have been opened,—“He that is called Jesus said unto me Ephatha,” *i.e.* be opened. He (my Beloved Lord and Master) put in His hand through the opening which His melting, tender love had opened, and caused my will to incline to His, so that I rose up and gladly opened to Him the door of my heart.

“It is not by might, nor by power;” it is not the eloquent, thrilling appeal—nor the awful reproof—nor the soul-touching remonstrance: not the tongues of men or of angels, (though, blessed be God, by all these He condescends to work His work of grace in men's souls;) it is not by convincing mens' hearts, and satisfying their judgements, that we do indeed speak words of truth and soberness, which brings them to spiritual life first, and recovers that life, when feeble and slothful, to strength again. No! it is the mighty and effectual working of the Holy Ghost—the hand of our beloved Lord and Master.

1. Acts xiv. 24, so Acts xvi. 14, so Luke xxiv. 45.

True grace is not inoperative. "*I rose up,*" &c. Its effects are visible, though not the manner of its operations.

So in this case it was seen in the great tenderness of spirit, self-reproach for past ingratitude, and immediate rising up and opening of the heart to Jesus. She was made ashamed of her former slothfulness, and quickly endeavoured to repair the breach of good manners, and wipe away the shame she had covered herself with, by reason of her foolish and untruthful excuses!

True grace also is very gracious. The presence of Christ in any person's soul makes them very gracious. Those who have most frequent visits of Christ are always the most humble, gentle, loving, and gracious persons!

It was Christ's visit to this sleepy soul which left the fragrant "*myrrh,*" &c.

These graces of His spirit dropped from His hand upon the door of her heart!

Yes! where Christ comes—whomsoever Christ visits—He leaves behind a fragrance, a holy tenderness and gentleness, a penitence of Spirit, which is like sweet-smelling myrrh and the dropings of Heavenly spices.

By this judge yourself Reader. If Christ has opened the door of your heart, it will be manifest to all around, by the fragrance, the myrrh, the graces

of His Spirit, which will adorn the profession of His true servant.

Though the slumberer is restored, yet not without chastisement.

*"I opened, but my Beloved was gone."* What a season of joy and blessing had been missed! Sloth brings its own chastisement in bitter disappointment. She heard Christ's voice, and with some emotion and feeling too! *"My soul failed me,"* &c. But now it was too late—Christ had withdrawn Himself and was gone! His love had been slighted, His grace resisted, and He departs for a season!

I say for a season, for as the verses that follow prove abundantly. His Church and all in it, "whom He hath purchased," "He will neither sell to another, nor forsake for another."

In one sense (and that the most important) He does not, will not forsake, utterly.

But, in another sense, that of giving joy, and great peace, by His comforting presence, this He does withdraw. And what a chastisement is this for a child of God! To seek the joy-giving presence of Jesus, but in vain! To call, and He seem not to answer! To follow Him in His house, word, ordinances, but find all empty husks—no Christ, no joy, no peace!

This is a chastisement. Therefore watch against



the very first symptoms of sloth and slumber. Before you fall asleep you will doze and nod your head.

Depend on this, if you are of the family of God and fall asleep, chastisement, and blows, and reproof, and rebukes, in providence and grace, will be the remedy employed to recover you. Your condition, at last, may be (through your own unwatchfulness and sloth) that of one only just saved—saved as by fire!

7. *The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me.*
8. *I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him that I am sick of love.*

This verse continues an account of the chastisement of the slumbering, but now most anxious and unhappy soul.

The search now after the beloved is much more painful and wearisome. When gentle chastisements do not arouse—"I will smite," saith the Lord, "even unto sickness." He who chastised David through the instrumentality of Shimei,<sup>1</sup> and Absalom his son, doubtless oftentimes permits evil men, blind and

1. Sam. ii. 16.

cruel "watchmen," to have pre-eminence in His Church on earth, and in its several congregations, who *evil-intreat* the anxious and distressed followers of the Lord, and mis-apply the Word; severely administering reproof and reproachful upbraidings, when they ought to pour in the balm of consolation, being "eyes to the blind and feet to the lame."

They "make the hearts of the righteous sad, whom the Lord hath not made sad;"<sup>1</sup> "discouraging those who ought to be encouraged, and talking to the grief of those whom God has wounded."<sup>2</sup>

Under such a dispensation, the soul of the enquiring disciple, "faint, yet pursuing," despairs not of finding Him, who, though for awhile He hideth himself, is yet not far from His Church. She is represented here as charging her acquaintance to tell her Lord how her "soul was sick of love!"

She complains not of the ill-treatment she had met with. She felt how much she deserved it. Her feelings are too intense to think of anything or any one save her absent Lord, "*I charge you*," says she, "*tell Him*," though I have been so foolish, so lukewarm, so slothful, that I opened not when He waited so patiently at the door of my heart; "tell Him (and He knoweth all things) that I love him still, yea "*my soul is sick of love*."

1. Ezk. xiii. 22.

2. Pam. lix. 26.

9. *What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? what is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?*
10. *My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand.*
11. *His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are bushy and black as a raven.*
12. *His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set.*
13. *His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers: his lips like lilies dropping sweet smelling myrrh.*
14. *His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl: his belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires.*
15. *His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold: his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars.*
16. *His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.*

The "*daughters of Jerusalem*" cannot understand the intense sorrow and anxious inquiry of a soul seeking after an absent Christ. They cannot appreciate either His presence or absence. They cannot sympathise in the conflicts and trials of the Believer. With kind and good-natured words, they ask who

her "beloved is," and, unconscious of His true excellencies, inquire concerning Him what there is, either in His person or character, so engaging as to make her so anxious to find him.

In reply, the Church draws a full portrait of Him.

Her description is in the most glowing and admirable language—incomparable and comprehensive! But who can, in suitable language, set forth His beauty; who, while he has everything in Him most beautiful and most admirable ("*white*" in His glory, as God; "*ruddy*," in His humiliation as God-man) has also that loveliness in him which is found in none other; for He is "fairer than the children of men," "higher than the kings of the earth;" a "standard-bearer," yea, the "chiefest," the tallest, and the most comely "among ten thousand."<sup>1</sup>

Where is the "pen of the ready writer," where the tongue of man or the trumpets of angels, that can befittingly set forth the praises of Jesus, "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person?"<sup>2</sup> We must confess that it is high above us, we cannot attain unto it. We must not value His beauty so *little* or undervalue it so *much* as to think it at all possible to sketch the portrait, much less fill up the picture of the beauty and glory of the Church's Bridegroom.

1. *Psm.* lxxxix. 27.

2 *Heb.* i. 3.

The Church mentions ten different particulars, which are identical with the description given by St. John in the Book of Revelations.

The scope of both passages is the same—to set forth in language, dictated by the Spirit of God, the superlative glory, grace, and excellence of Jesus. I confess I am as unable, as I am unworthy to attempt, even to copy this portrait of my Lord.

May the writer and the reader be enabled by the Spirit, so to gaze on the mystic beauty of Jesus.—be so enabled to see His excellencies, that beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, they may be changed into the same image here, and behold Jesus as He is, hereafter.<sup>1</sup>

May we grow increasingly familiar with His features, character, and grace. May our souls be so ravished with His love, that we may “*hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering.*”<sup>2</sup> Not fearing to confess Him as ours, while we declare His excellencies to others—“*This is my Beloved, and this is my friend.*”

1. John iii. 2.

2. Heb. x. 23.

## CHAPTER VI.

1. *Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? whither is thy beloved turned aside? that we may seek him with thee.*
2. *My beloved has gone down unto his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens. and to gather lilies.*
3. *I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine: he feedeth among the lilies.*

It is well so to be able both to exhibit Christ in our life and conversation, as to draw the attention of others to Him. Such was the case here. The intense anxiety in seeking Jesus, and the joy of assurance in having found Him, and the rich experience the Church had of Him in His person, work, and offices, drew forth the enquiry from the lookers on, "*Whither has thy beloved gone? whither is thy beloved turned aside? that we may*

*seek Him.*" Those who seek Jesus in the communion of His saints, will not fail to find Him.

His saints know very well where He is gone,<sup>1</sup> and therefore, are well able to direct others to Him. Happy are they, who, by their holy simplicity and godly walk and conversation, are as "epistles read and known"<sup>2</sup> guide-posts pointing the "weary and heavy laden" to Jesus! These are the "*lilies*" in Christ's "*garden*," which adorn and beautify it. Here he delights to "*come down*," though we see Him not with the natural eye. Yet He walks among his Churches, and gathers in His grace, the "*lilies*" to adorn His coronation chaplet in the day of His espousals.

If you would find Christ, and be found of Him, seek Him in the appointed ministries of His Church. There He has promised to "record His name,"<sup>3</sup> and spiritually to be present.

How beautiful to see the chastised backslider again restored to the full consciousness of her own acceptance. "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine." Her communion with Him was her assurance of this, "*He feedeth among lilies.*"

1. John xxii. 17.

2. II. Cor. iii. 5.

3. Exod. xx. 24.

4. *Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners.*
5. *Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me : thy hair is as a flock of goats that appear from Gilead.*
6. *Thy teeth are as a flock of sheep which go up from the washing, whereof every one beareth twins, and there is not one barren among them.*
7. *As a piece of pomegranate are thy temples within thy locks.*
8. *There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number.*
9. *My dove, my undefiled is but one ; she is the only one of her mother, she is the choice one of her that bare her. The daughters saw her, and blessed her ; yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her.*
- 10 *Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners ?*

Whom He loveth, "He loveth to the end."<sup>1</sup> Notwithstanding all the waywardness, and sloth, and selfish, unmannerly behaviour of His Church during

<sup>1</sup> John xiii. 1.



the season of her lukewarmness and slumbering, Jesus here manifests His unchangeable love towards her, now that she was restored, a chastised but accepted and acceptable bride. Her discipline was over. It had wrought its purposed work.

Her sins and infirmities He remembers no more. She is beautiful in His eyes as "*Tirzah*,"<sup>1</sup> a city of Manasseh, which in the Hebrew tongue signifieth "pleasantness:" "*comely as Jerusalem*," which was the joy of the whole earth, being as a city "that is compact together"<sup>2</sup>—beautiful for situation; and "*terrible as an army with banners*"—overcoming the world by her faith,<sup>3</sup> and like Jacob having power with God.<sup>4</sup>

Then follows language of intense affection, suited to human conception of human affection, yet far transcending all human notion of divine condescension.

The "love of Christ passeth knowledge," and this expresion of it passeth all human imagination.

When we see "Him as He is," and "our vile bodies be changed like unto His glorious body," then we may be able somewhat to realize the length and breadth, and height and depth, of the grace, and love, and tenderness of our Beloved!

This blessed time seems foreshadowed in the ninth

1. I. Kings xiv. 7.    2. Ps. cxxii. 3.    3. John v. 4.

4. Gen. xxxii. 28.

and tenth verses, as though in a parenthesis. The "*queens, concubines, and virgins*," in number beyond all arithmetical calculation, seem to denote the "saved of the nations,"<sup>1</sup> during the glorious millennial kingdom.

These shall be the Church's companions, who shall see her and praise her glory when she "*looketh forth*," clothed in the radiance of the Resurrection morning, "*fair as the moon, clear as the sun*," (having no spot or blemish or any such thing,) "*and terrible as an army with banners*."

11. *I went down into the garden of nuts to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether the vine flourished, and the pomegranates budded.*
12. *Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib.*
13. *Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon thee. What will ye see in the Shulamite? As it were the company of two armies.*

During the time of the Lord's absence from His Bride, He went down into "*His garden*."

Though withdrawn from her as His spouse, He still was mindful of His "garden," which was filled with a variety of most pleasant and fruitful trees, "*nuts*," "*vines*," and "*pomegranates*." His de-

1. Rev. xxi. 24.



communion of saints." He asks and answers the question concerning her—What she is, and who she is like?—" *She is, as it were, the company of two armies.*" "She is a Mahanaim, as the two hosts which Jacob saw : a host of saints, and a host of angels ministering unto them :"—the Church militant and the Church triumphant.

Gen. xxxii. 1—2.

## CHAPTER VII.

1. *How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince's daughter ! the joints of thy thighs are like jewels, the work of the hands of a cunning workman.*
2. *Thy navel is like a round goblet, which wanteth not liquor : thy belly is like an heap of wheat set about with lilies.*
3. *Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins.*
4. *Thy neck is as a tower of ivory ; thine eyes like the fishpools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim ; thy nose is as the tower of Lebanon which looketh toward Damascus.*
5. *Thine head upon thee is like Carmel, and the hair of thine head like purple ; the king is held in the galleries.*
6. *How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights !*
7. *This thy stature is like to a palm tree, and thy breasts to clusters of grapes.*

8. *I said, I will go up to the palm tree, I will take hold  
of the boughs thereof: now also thy breasts shall  
be as clusters of the vine, and the smell  
of thy nose like apples;*
9. *And the roof of thy mouth like the best wine for my  
beloved, that goeth down sweetly, causing the lips  
of those that are asleep to speak.*
10. *I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me.*

The beauty of the Church—here called the “*prince's daughter*,” as elsewhere the “*king's daughter*,”<sup>1</sup> in mystic allusion to her marriage with the Lamb—is described as Israel's degeneracy is, by the Prophet, “*from the sole of the foot, even unto the head*.”<sup>2</sup>

Her “*feet*” are praised, being “*shod with the preparations of the gospel of peace*.”<sup>3</sup> Thus she is led to walk holily in the light of God's countenance, and with a single eye to Christ's glory.

The “*joints of the thighs*” of the mystical body of His Church, are like sockets of gold, being bound firmly together in love and unity.<sup>4</sup>

The “*navel*” of His Church—those ordinances by which she communicates food and nourishment

1. Psalm xlv. 13.

2. Isaiah i. 6.

3. Eph. vi. 15.

4. Col. ii. 19.

to her children—is praised, being in a healthy state through fear of the Lord.<sup>1</sup>

The “*belly*” and “*head*,” which likewise supply food, useful and consolatory, to the Church’s spiritual children; her “*neck*,” “*eyes*,” “*nose*,” and “*hair*,”—all are praised because of their comeliness, and the glory which they bring to the Lord, whose they are and for whom they have been “so curiously” fashioned.

Such is Christ’s delight in the comeliness and strength of His Church. So “*fair and pleasant*” is she, that He confesses Himself, by a mystery of grace, to be “*held in the galleries*” of communion with her. He cannot leave or forsake her.

He will abide with her and enjoy the fruits of her holiness and love, which are sweet and acceptable as the “*palm tree*” and “*clusters of the vine*,” and pleasant as the “*smell of citrons* ;” grateful and refreshing as the “*best wine*” which “*goeth down sweetly*”—i. e., the wine of the Gospel.

The Church, thus enjoying her Lord’s commendation, triumphs in the comfortable assurance of it; acknowledges His sovereignty over her; and comforts herself with the assurance that “*His desire is towards her*.”

What an unspeakable honour—what unutterable consolation—that Jesus takes such pleasure in His

1. Prov. ii. 8.

dear people; that He “*desires*,” that where He is, there “*they should be also*.”<sup>1</sup>

11. *Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages.*
12. *Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth: there will I give thee my loves.*
13. *The mandrakes give a smell, and at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved.*

As Isaac “went out into the fields to meditate,”<sup>2</sup> and as David and Jonathan,<sup>3</sup> that they might, without interruption, hold godly fellowship together, so the Church desires, here, to go forth without the city, into the quiet simplicity of country life, that there she might, undisturbed, hold sweet communion with Jesus.

And even thus did He, when in the flesh, oftentimes retire into a desert place,<sup>4</sup> to refresh both His own and His disciples’ spirits, in the midst of the busy excitement of the day.

How much the Church needs that quiet hiding of itself in these days of religious excitement, all know who know anything of spiritual life!

1. John xiv. 3, so John xvii. 24

2. Gen. xxiv. 63.

3. I Sam. xx. 11.

4. Luke ix. 10, so Mark vi. 31.



*Sedebit solitarius et tacabit, quia levavit se supra se.* "The solitary person will sit still and hold his peace, because he hath lifted up himself above himself."

Shun not, therefore, but rather seek retirement and solitude with Jesus. There does Jesus love to find and comfort His people. There you will find the "atmosphere more pure, the heavens wider opened, and God brought nearer!"

And think not that you cannot be alone in the fields of devout spiritual communion with Jesus—even though called, in your civil capacities, to be continually in the midst of the crowd. However great be the number of persons you hold converse with, however multiplied the business in which you are engaged, you may still be *alone* with Jesus; walking in hallowed communion with Him, offering to Him the choicest of your affections, the "*tender grape*," and the "*pomegranate*," and the "*mandrakes*," which give a pleasant smell; graces, fruits of righteousness, "*new and old*," which you must treasure up and lay by for Him who is not unmindful of your works and labours of love for His sake.<sup>1</sup>

1. Heb. vi. 10.

## CHAPTER VIII.

1. *O that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother ! when I should find thee without, I would kiss thee : yes, I should not be despised.*
2. *I would lead thee, and bring thee into my mother's house, who would instruct me : I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate.*
3. *His left hand should be under my head, and his right hand should embrace me.*
4. *I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that yea stir not up, nor awake my love, until he please.*

Conscious of the utter incapacity of the children of the world to do otherwise than mock her earnest longings and love for Jesus ; and knowing how foolish and despised she must be by them in her enthusiastic admiration of her Lord ; the Church longs for the time when nothing should cloud, nothing hinder her full and unrestrained expression of fond attachment ; when her motives should be altogether beyond the possibility of misapprehension.

She promises to herself how diligently she would improve such a season. How she would keep close to His society ; with what delight she would “*lead*”

Him into her "*mother's house*," that all her kinsfolk might also know and love Him: how she would feast Him with the rich "*spiced wine*" of devoted affection, and the "*juice*" of her "*pomegranate*;" the fruits of her most holy and chastened obedience.

She would not then "*be despised*," neither would she faint any more.<sup>1</sup> Underneath her would be "the everlasting arms"<sup>2</sup> of her beloved and Almighty Friend.

5. *Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved? I raised thee up under the apple tree: there thy mother brought thee forth; there she brought thee forth that bare thee.*
6. *Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm; for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.*
7. *Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.*

Briefly but beautifully do these words describe the Church's condition, origin, and hopes. Leaning upon the arm of Jesus, in close familiar fellowship and love, the pilgrim is travelling up from the

1. Chapter ii. 6.

2. Ps. lxxiii. 8.

wilderness of this world, to the "many mansions" in our Father's House. As she hastes, with weary step, oftentimes she finds it good to remind herself, for her comfort and encouragement, of this and that green spot where she found the Lord precious, "where she sought and proved His affection," where she "*raised Him up*," (*i.e.*) aroused Him by her fervent prayers of faith, to help her; excited Him to draw near unto her, so that she enjoyed His love, and the close and intimate nearness of His affection. Like "Elim," the place of palm trees, well remembered by the hosts of Israel, after they had passed through the wild and terrible desert, so these spots, where the citron and "*apple tree*" furnished so pleasant a shade, are not forgotten, even when the pilgrim reaches the summit of "the everlasting hills."

Till then, the Church prays that she may be ever recognised and acknowledged by Him as His :—precious as a "signet on His right hand;"<sup>1</sup> near to his heart as the breastplate worn by the high-priest of Israel.

And why thus passionately long for such close and intimate communion?

Because the love that was shed abroad in her soul was so intense: "*strong as death*," as the "noble company of martyrs" gave proof; "*cruel*"

<sup>1</sup> Jer. xxii. 24.

or unyielding as the "*grave*," the "coals thereof" (the fuel which feeds this flame of divine love) being lit by the baptism of fire by the Holy Ghost. Such a spiritual flame in a Believer's soul, no "*waters*," of indwelling sin can "*quench*," though they may seem for awhile to extinguish it, neither can the "*floods*" of temptation and trial "*drown it*."

All that a man hath, yea, the substance of all the honours of the world, are nothing to the Believer in comparison with the assurance of his interest in, and enjoyment of the love of Jesus! Every thing else, when put into competition, is "*utterly contemned*."

8. *We have a little sister, and she hath no breasts : what shall we do for our sister in the day when she shall be spoken for ?*
9. *If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver : and if she be a door, we will enclose her with boards of cedar.*
- 10, *I am a wall, and my breasts like towers : then was I in his eyes as one that found favour.*

The Gentile Church, embracing all those who were "predestinated unto the adoption of children"<sup>1</sup>—those other sheep of Christ's fold, are, doubtless here referred to. It is called a "*little sister*," being

1. Eph. i. 5.

younger in the calling and election of God than the Jewish Church, who, through faith, during the Patriarchal and Levitical polity were gathered into Christ's one Church.

Though as yet uncalled, when this Song was written, they were nevertheless given to Christ in the everlasting covenant,<sup>1</sup> and so are spoken of as being, even then, united to Christ—joined in one mystical body.

*"Our little sister hath no breasts"*—i. e., no grace developed, no manifestations of divine growth and affection.<sup>2</sup>

The Church enquires, like Peter did concerning John—what should be done for the "*little sister?*" To which the Lord answers—that "*she should grow up into a holy temple, a habitation of God through the Spirit.*"<sup>3</sup> Every grace needed to adorn her, even to the "*doors,*" shall be lavishly bestowed. Her walls shall be salvation and her gates praise.

*"We will do it"* saith the Lord:—"we," the Triune, everlasting Jehovah; and therefore it shall be most full, eternal, sure, complete, and glorious.

1. Psalm ii. 8.    2. Ezk. xiv. 7.    3. Eph. ii. 12—22.

11. *Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon; he let out the vineyard unto keepers; every one for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand pieces of silver.*
12. *My vineyard, which is mine, is before me; thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred.*

To whom much has been given, from them much also is required.

The "*vineyard of Baal-hamon*," which signifies, in the Hebrew tongue, "place of abundance," is another type of the same Church, which, under such a variety of figures, is spoken of in this Song.

Taken in its more limited sense it is typical of every Believer's soul, which, being surrounded with the wall of Christ's love and watered continually with the rich dew of His Spirit's influences, yields its fruits in due season, both to Christ the Lord and those who are keepers of the vineyards.

Those that work for Christ benefit themselves and reap unspeakable advantages.

13. *Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice: cause me to hear it.*
14. *Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices.*

Here is Christ's parting charge to His spouse

before leaving her for a a little while, and her earnest entreaty for His most speedy return.

While He is gone to "*the mountains of spices*" His Church must tarry below, and abide in the gardens of Church fellowship and ordinances appointed unto the "time of the restitution of all things."<sup>1</sup>

Her "*companions*" in the tribulation and patience of Christ's kingdom, will hearken to "*her voice*" as unto Christ's voice. But He charges her to be sure and let *Him* also hear her voice.

That is no communion of Saints where Christ is not the chief delight, and the principal topic of conversation.

The Church responds to her Saviour's parting charge by an earnest petition for His speedy return.

"*Make haste,*" says she, "*my Beloved,*" to return. Take me to thyself and thy Father's house !

"*Be thou like a roe and a young hart !*" Swift be thy progress across the "*mountains of spices,*" those heavenly places which I know must retain thee until the time of the restitution of all things ! Hasten the time, O Lord ! Speed thy coming, O thou desire of nations, thou promise of Eden, thou hope of thy Church !

Though it be pleasant to dwell in thy "*garden,*" and hear thy voice, and look forward by faith to the

1. Acts iii 21.



day of thy return, yet it is better far to see thee as thou art, to behold thy glory, and be for ever with thee ! “ Even so, come, Lord Jesus, yea, come quickly ! ”<sup>1</sup>

Who among Christ’s flock will refuse to utter the same fervent cry ? Whose soul does not yearn for that day to dawn which shall reveal Jesus in His Kingly glory, to deliver every sin-burdened, sorrowing child of God, and all groaning creation, from the burden of the flesh, and the cruel tyranny of evil ? Blessed consummation of the weary, sorrowful, strugglings of the Church !

Let us pray for it ; let us watch for it more than they that “ watch for the morning.”

The wrecks of a broken, ruined world ; the tears of the bereaved ; the groans of the oppressed ; the buffetings of Satan ; the struggles of indwelling sin ; all give strength and meaning to the cry, “ How long, O Lord ? ”

O Lord make haste ! we wait for thy salvation ! “ Why are thy chariot wheels so long in coming, why tarry the wheels of thy chariot ? ”

1 Rev. xxii. 20.

